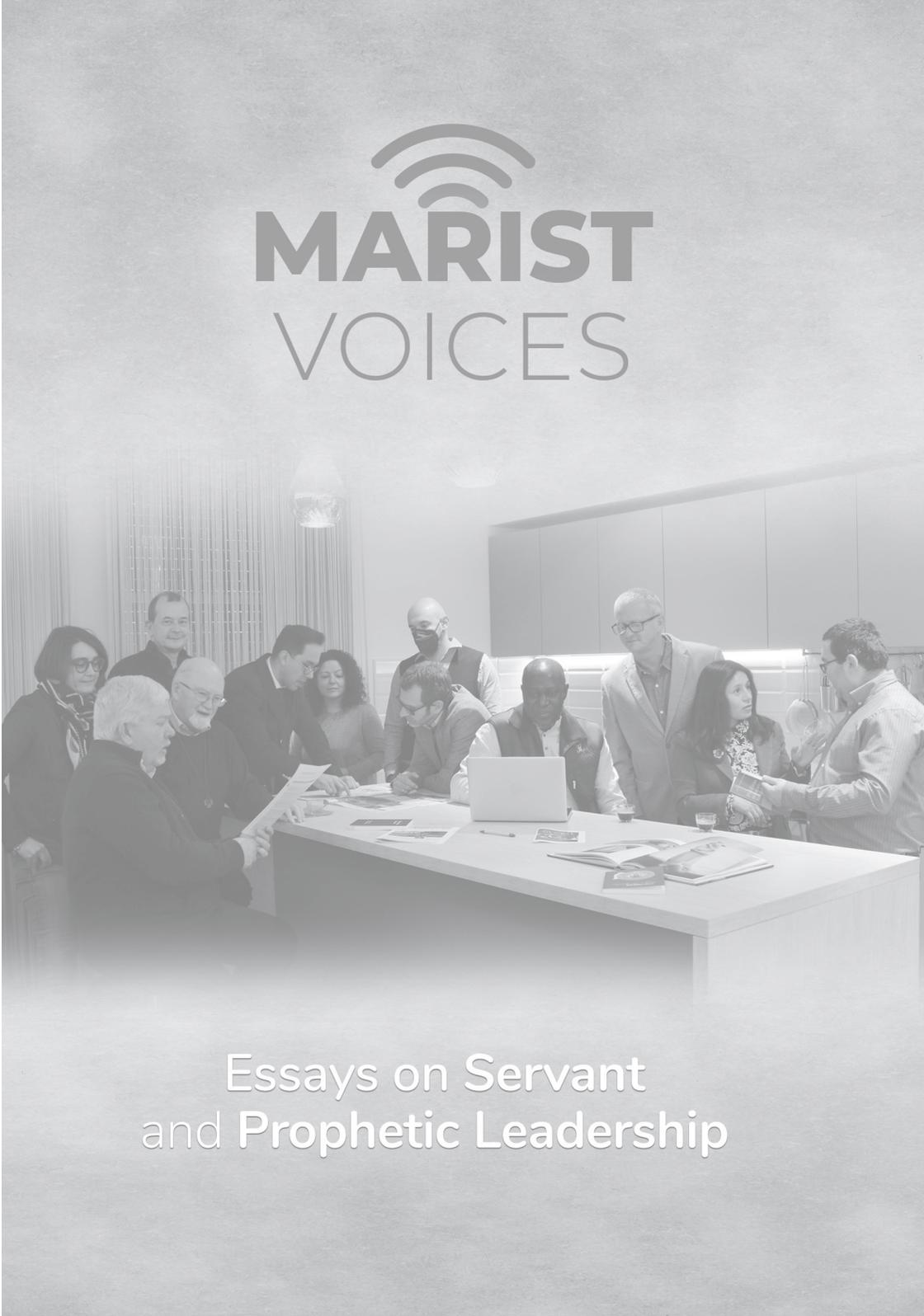




MARIST VOICES



Essays on Servant
and Prophetic Leadership



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Essays on Servant
and Prophetic Leadership

Institute of the Marist Brothers
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P.le Marcellino Champagnat, 2
00144 Rome – Italy
comunica@fms.it
www.champagnat.org

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FOREWORD

Br. Ernesto Sánchez Barba
Superior General

The publication of “Marist Voices: Essays on Prophetic and Servant Leadership” is an initiative that seeks to respond to the invitation of the XXII General Chapter regarding leadership. In the Chapter document it is expressed that “for a new beginning, we believe in a style of government that assumes a prophetic and servant leadership, which closely accompanies Marist life and mission”. And, among other proposals, the Chapter suggested “identifying and forming leaders, lay and brothers, at all levels, in view of growing in co-responsibility for Marist life and mission”.

We believe that reflection and formation on leadership is a necessary and important topic at all levels of animation and government in the Institute. In the Administrative Units, we have various initiatives that seek to form, strengthen and accompany Marist leaders. We wish to support them, and invite you to develop some more that are suggested in the “Servant Leadership” project of the strategic plan of the General Administration.

A few months ago, in the dialogue that we carried out within the General Council, it seemed to us that it would be useful to have written reflections, experiences and practical ideas related to Marist leadership that could serve as an invitation, a motivation, a consultation and a reference. This is how the idea of producing this book came about.

We have had the generous response of several brothers to our invitation to write the essays that make up this book. My thanks to all those who have collaborated in its writing, among them several brothers of the General Council. I thank the co-ordinating team, Brothers Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, Vicar General, Ben Consigli and Ken McDonald, General Councillors, for this initiative and for their organisational and follow-up work. Many thanks also to those who have helped with translations, revision, layout and printing.

We have a long experience of Marist leadership, beginning with that passed on to us by Father Champagnat as well as by so many brothers

and lay people throughout the history of the Institute. As Marist leaders, we seek to live today the attitudes of Jesus, inspired by Mary. It is up to each one of us to adapt and update the values received in the present context, seeking to live and exercise the prophetic and servant leadership to which we have been invited.

Faternally,

H. Ernesto Sánchez Barba,

Superior General

January, 2 2022

PREFACE

Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, Vicar General
Br. Benjamin Consigli, Councilor General
Br. Ken McDonald, Councilor General

You are holding in your hands a book on Marist leadership. Perhaps, with curiosity, you are wondering why we have decided to speak about this topic and how we are going to approach it. The truth is that it has been a delight, with a bit of daring, to produce this publication.

This book is inspired by the Calls of the XXII General Chapter (2017), which urges us to live a servant and prophetic leadership that closely accompanies life. With this in mind, we asked ourselves the following questions: How can we explain to Marists today what this model of leadership means? How can we translate some of its characteristics into our daily experience? What happens if we give a "Marist voice" to this style of leading, serving and accompanying Marist life mission? How can we be more faithful today to Jesus' style of leading? How do we connect our leadership with Champagnat's style and with our tradition? What can we propose to Marists of Champagnat to rethink their own style of leadership?

With these considerations in mind, we invited, in this first text, a group of Marist Brothers from all continents to explain to us what it means to be servant and prophetic leaders, according to their own experiences and reflections. Certainly, the result is a very diverse publication, both in styles and approaches, but very integrated in terms of the fundamental content. Reading the essays, one can see the richness and diversity of our experiences and the common Marist denominator. Thanks to the generosity of the authors, we have explored the different characteristics of a provocative, current, and prophetic leadership that invites us to question our practices, our formation, and our "ways" of leading and acting. In addition, we have done an intercultural exercise, which shows us the value of the global family to which we belong.

All this has helped us to prepare this publication. We hope that it will serve to deepen conversations, enrich formation, facilitate formation courses, and help everyone to rethink how to serve in the style of Jesus, and that of so many other leaders, fully human and committed to goodness and compassion. Everyone is on our minds: ordinary Marists, educators,

administrators, community leaders, apostolic leaders, provincial, regional, or global leaders; also, all those who do not belong to our "family". We are religious, lay Marists, academics, and leaders of various organizations, as well as many whose desire is to live to "serve and serve first". We do not wish to limit anything or anyone, but to increase the collaboration of all of us who seek to do good, to create positive and transformative movements, and to develop communities, organizations and institutions willing to effect positive change.

We have asked authors to write essays and avoid the idea that they are doing a work of similar sequence and style. This gives a lot of freedom, both in style and content. Each one has reflected from his or her own experience and knowledge. We know that there are many books on leadership, but our contribution will be special because it will reflect our unique Marist "voice".

Of course, we hope that these pages will help you to listen to the interesting arguments and experiences that each person has contributed:

1. To serve as a reference for you to understand the meaning of prophetic and servant leadership (chapter 1).
2. To motivate you to develop a new style of leadership based on a significant presence (chapter 2).
3. To encourage reflection and understanding of some fundamental characteristics of being a Marist leader through: the need for strategic conceptualization (chapter 3), the development of empathy and compassion (chapter 4), the importance of healing (chapter 5), the need for constant attention (chapter 6), the core factor of persuasion (chapter 7), attentive and contemplative listening (chapter 8), the importance of an intuitive vision of the future (chapter 9), the sense of being a helpful person (chapter 10), the commitment to the growth of people and their empowerment (chapter 11) and the importance of building community within an experience of fraternity (chapter 12).

4. To help us develop three basic skills: communication (chapter 13), decision-making (chapter 14) and collaboration in group work environments (chapter 15).
5. To enlighten each other with some reflections on the biblical basis of leadership (chapter 16), the Marian foundation of our leadership style (chapter 17), the richness derived from the example of Marcellin Champagnat (chapter 18), the background of our tradition (chapter 19), and the spiritual, moral, and ethical core of our leadership (chapter 20).
6. To provide some perspectives on the initial or ongoing formation of leaders in this emerging world (chapter 21), and the role of Marist Institutions of Higher Education in the promotion, research, and formation, of prophetic-servant leadership (chapter 22).

We have many aspects left to explore. These are the ones that, for now, we propose to you because they are enlightening, practical and inspiring.

It is our hope that the reading and reflection on these themes will encourage each of us to ask ourselves questions which will challenge us in the way we "lead". We know that this collection of essays has been written by an extraordinary group of Brothers, to whom we are deeply grateful for their generosity, beginning with our current Superior General, Brother Ernesto Sánchez, and former Superiors General, Seán Sammon and Emili Turú. For some authors, it has been a challenge which they have shared with their teams or others. Together, we have brought forth something that has a particular beauty: our desire to serve and to inspire solidarity and hope.

We have no doubt that this first step will open the way to listen to the voices of lay Marists, companions in life and mission in the future, and of other Brothers in different positions and apostolates. We ardently hope that time and Providence will allow us to make it happen.

For now, we hope you enjoy this content and that it brings you much encouragement.

Rome, January 2, 2022

Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez, VG

Br. Benjamin Consigli, GC

Br. Ken McDonald, GC

PART I
VISION

CHAPTER 1



Br. Benjamin L. Consigli
General Councilor



Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez
Vicar General

Introduction to Servant and Prophetic Leadership: Call and Purpose

For leadership there is only one road: service. There is no other way. If you have many qualities, the ability to communicate, etc., but if you are not a servant, your leadership will fail, it is useless, it has not power to gather [people] together... Leadership must enter into service, but with a personal love for the people. (Pope Francis, 2014)

I. Our call

Servant Leadership

Almost from the moment he was elected by the College of Cardinals to succeed the retiring Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis left little doubt as to the direction he wanted to take the Church, beginning with adopting the name of Saint Francis of Assisi, the 12th- and 13th-century figure who eschewed his family wealth for a monastic life of service to the poor and the environment. Other popes have had the same message, but Francis has been very insistent in keeping this message at the forefront — servant leadership and caring for those most in need first.

As a leader, he goes where the people are — the people that are hurting, that are poor. That is what real leadership is: Connecting first to where people are before you can take them to where you want them to go. As a result, when people look to him, he inspires hope. It is all about this emotional human connection...to help “the other”.

While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase “servant leadership” was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, Greenleaf R. (1977/2002) said:

***The servant-leader is servant first...** It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first,*

*perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first **to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.** The best test, and difficult to administer, is: **Do those served grow as persons?** Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 27)*

For Greenleaf, the servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

So, what does Pope Francis' actions and this concept bring to us as leaders, as Christians, and as evangelizers?

Jesus as Servant Leader

There is no question the most admired, respected, honored, and remembered leader through the ages was Jesus Christ. His leadership style could best be summed up in Matthew 20:28: “... *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but **to serve** and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” He came to teach, lead, and train. How did He do this? He served. Jesus' mandate is for us to make disciples, teaching them to follow his example.

Jesus asked his followers not only to share the Good News with others, but to witness to it, to model the Good News, and to understand how to exercise authority and influence. While he was with them, he taught them many lessons to use after he left.

In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus does just that.

*Jesus called [the disciples] together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **Not so with you.** Instead, whoever wants to become great among you **must be your servant**, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

There is a little phrase buried in the middle of that passage. Did you catch it? “Not so with you.”

Some, like the Gentiles and the Pharisees of old, use their power to overpower those around them. They make sure everyone knows who the boss is. *Not so with you.* Today, countries are full of business leaders who overpower and exploit those people around them and it seems that political leaders around us are seeking power and influence to use for their own good. *Not so with you.*

If you are in authority over anyone as a Christian, **you must serve.** In John’s account of the last supper, Jesus does something so culturally unexpected it catches the disciples off guard. In John 13:3-5, we read that,

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and **began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.***

In this upper room, as he prepares for the cross set before him, Jesus becomes acutely aware of his authority. So, what did Jesus do? **He immediately humbled himself and served.**

John 13:12-16 recounts,

*Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, **you also should wash one another’s feet**. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

And so, it should be with us. Whenever we realize that we have been given authority, we should immediately and tangibly serve others. This is the mandate of anyone who identifies as a Christian and Marist.

Marist Brothers’ XXII General Chapter & The Rule of Life

At the XXII General Chapter held in Rio Negro, Colombia, the participants were called to experience together a new LaValla, for a NEW BEGINNING. LaValla, the home of our origins, reminds us that Marcellin Champagnat was moved by the needs and possibilities of the young people in his parish and in the surrounding hamlets and listened attentively to the Spirit, to discover what God was asking him at that point in time.

In a similar way, the members of the Chapter undertook a careful discernment exercise, trying to answer the two fundamental questions:

Who is God asking us to be in this emerging world?

What is God asking us to do in this emerging world?

The answers to these two questions made up the five calls presented in the *Chapter Message*.

At the same time, aware that these calls contain concrete implications for all dimensions of our life and mission, the Chapter participants decided to develop the ideas across five areas: our vocation as Brothers; our mission; Brother-Lay relationship, as Marists of Champagnat; government and how we use our resources. **The essence of servant leadership is a**

transversal element, present either implicitly or explicitly, in all areas impacting Marist life and mission, and thus is a foundational component of the charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat.

The recently released “*Wherever you go...*” *The Marist Brothers’ Rule of Life* (2020, n. 70) tells us that

*The chief contribution of a brother to the life of the Church is to be on mission as brother. A brother’s vocation itself is a ministry within the Church; a reminder to the wider community about the importance of fraternity and (the) **fundamental call to be a community of brothers and sisters in service (diakonia), ...***

And that the place of the brother in mission is

*at the banquet in the Reign of God... (where) he... serves the table, caring especially for those thought to be most insignificant. **By putting on the apron of brotherhood, (the) specific vestment in the liturgy of life, (the brother) joins (his) service to the mission of God.** (n. 70)*

This is what Marcellin hoped for his “little brothers of Mary” (and those who would minister alongside them)—that they would serve the Church and society as evangelizers and educators, especially to those on the margins of life.

Leadership In the Way of Mary

In *Water from the Rock* (2007), our recent reference text on Marist spirituality, we read:

*The Marists understood their project to be a sharing in **Mary’s work of bringing Christ-life to birth and being with the Church as it came to be born.** It was a work which they hoped would touch every diocese of*

the world and would be structured like a multi-branched tree by including lay people, priests, sisters and brothers. (n. 11)

And, later in the same document:

“As Marists, we share in the spiritual motherhood of Mary as we take our part in bringing Christ-life to the world of those whose lives we share. We nurture that life in the ecclesial community, whose communion we strengthen through fervent prayer and generous service. (n. 26)

For Marists, our way of being and ministering is rooted in the way of Mary, the first disciple of Jesus, and “Our Ordinary Resource”. The main contemporary reference document on Marist education is known in English as *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat, A Vision for Marist Education Today (1998)*. The book finishes by describing an ideal for the Marist educator, one that is sourced in the Biblical images of Mary and highlights elements of what it means to be a servant-leader. (Marist Brothers. *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: A Vision for Marist Education Today*, 02/01/1998):

Like **Mary of the Annunciation** (Luke 1: 26-38), we are open to the movement of God in our lives, of God for whom nothing is impossible. Despite our doubts, fears, and feelings of inadequacy, we accept in faith God’s invitation to **participate in the work of spreading the Good News**. Like **Mary of the Visitation** (Luke 1: 39-45), **we go out from our communion with the Lord full of faith and hope**. We go to meet young people in their places of need, offering them our love.

Like **Mary of Nazareth** (Luke 2: 39-52), we **nurture, guide and care for** the young, developing in them a knowledge and love of the God who is active in their lives, and a respect for all God has created. Like her, we accept them as they are even when we do not fully understand their decisions. Like **Mary of Cana** (John

2: 1-11), we are sensitive to the **needs of others**. We invite the young to do whatever Jesus bids.

Like **Mary of Calvary** (John 19: 25-27), we recognize Jesus in the face of the broken and suffering, aching for them with a mother's heart **and believing in them** with a mother's passion; and like **Mary of the Cenacle** (Acts 1: 12 - 2: 4), we **build community around us**. In an age that is adrift spiritually, **we bring the belief and vision** of a new and Spirit-filled Church.

As Marists, we follow Jesus in the way of Mary. This is the charismatic foundation of Marcellin's dream and a core element of his spirituality and his leadership.

II. Our purpose

A renewed leadership

In thinking about this publication, we have in mind the whole Marist Institute as it moves through a world of rapid and emerging change. These transformations affect important aspects of our life, of our self-understanding as a charismatic community and of our apostolic service. Sociological, cultural and economic changes are emerging with ever clearer evidence: we are living in a new time, a new normality, a change of epoch, a new era (XXII General Chapter, 2017).

Such changes oblige us to adopt a form of leadership that provides a point of reference in this context. As students of history, we aspire to a deep understanding of the situations facing the Institute, the Church, societies and individuals. The XXII General Chapter (2017) rightly understood that this task required a style of leadership that went beyond traditional competencies or commonly accepted organisational models of performance. Faithful to the essence of a religious institute, to an ecclesiology of communion, and to the spirit of a Church which goes

forth, the way of expressing and living leadership is inspired by a model with characteristics based on fraternity, service and prophecy. These three values are proper to the experience of “being a brother/sister”, in a family - made up of religious, lay men and women - who share the experience of the Marist charism and, at the same time, who are connected to many people of good will, of different religious or existential positions. We do not wish to avoid or spiritualise what it means to organise, lead and administer according to the legal or societal obligations in which the Institute carries out its mission. We do, though, want to affirm that this can be done with a particular emphasis on the noble aspirations that are linked to our DNA and to our Marist spirituality. Let us see.

The 20th and 21st centuries have shown a special awareness of and interest in leadership theories (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), and this has produced new levels of reflection and practice. Leadership is increasingly included as a field of study in the development of many formative processes for ministry leaders, for religious in formation, and in many university degrees. It is systematically added to in professional development. It is promoted in church institutions and movements as well as in companies and social organisations. It is a basic and accepted component of all kinds of work in groups or organisational structures.

Exploring this change in his reflection *Developing Holistic Leaders – Beyond the Obvious*, Karsten Jonsen (Jonsen, 2020) suggests that the concept of leadership has been marked by romanticism and individualism. Today, however, leadership has other connotations which have gradually become more concrete in all senses, practical as well as conceptual. We are witnessing new, more flexible, horizontal, communitarian and democratic approaches. People are progressively refining and improving their art. There is an increase in skills, attitudes, knowledge and competencies to lead groups, teams, projects and organisations. Leadership today finds its inspiration more in fraternity and service. It’s evolving to co-create, co-produce, and co-generate knowledge and practice. Progress is towards developing better service, particularly solidarity and social awareness. This

generates a virtuous cycle, “because by giving, you receive”. In this way, a continuous cycle of universal generosity develops that has an incremental return.

As a global charismatic family, the Marist Institute is enhanced when it consolidates an intentionally formed local global leadership. This also means fostering leadership with a strong Marist identity, sharing and learning from good practices, and living our common organizational and religious values. Such a service is able to demonstrate, in concrete terms, the necessary personal resilience, the richness of spirituality integrated into management, and the core value of trust. This vision constitutes an element of evangelical accomplishment in today’s world, different from mere social success.

In our administrative units, institutions, communities, educational and ministry centres, we must adapt in response to the challenge of a different world, a world at the same time global and fractured. We live amidst a constant interplay between the educational, cultural, religious, political and economic. Livelihood and sustainability are enhanced by a greater awareness and understanding of these multifaceted realities. Accordingly, human potential adapts and improves its capabilities so as to achieve long-term goals

Prophetic servant leadership has demonstrated enormous potential and great real value for our particular historical moment, both on a personal and group level. It is this conviction that guides the present publication: to capture the uniqueness of a servant leadership experience that is capable of helping to meaningfully navigate this moment in history and to do so prophetically. It is our hope that all who wish to “serve and serve first” can develop and adopt strategies that make a difference in their communities, associations or work groups through specific values, attitudes, knowledge, capacities and skills.

The conceptualisation and articulation of prophetic servant leadership offers a dynamic approach to respond to emerging demands in all their complexity. Therefore, the reflection on these essays seeks to highlight:

- Leadership as integration, which involves incorporating, sharing and unifying processes in order to face the challenges and ruptures of our social and ecclesial reality.
- Leadership as generativity, which helps to work in teams, to visualise different meanings, to expose problem areas, to find new solutions, to engage in new opportunities and to adapt flexibly to emerging environments.
- Leadership as a global value, which facilitates Institute-wide processes such as networking, connection and interconnection, innovation, internationality, interculturality and co-responsibility for Marist life and mission.
- Leadership as service and prophecy, which seeks to serve people first and foremost, starting from a framework of fundamental values, and empowering communities of leaders to be, in their turn, servant and prophetic.

Empowering, growing, serving, being one's fullest self

Progressively in these essays, we will discover that servant leadership – ethical and prophetic – is a Marist expression which fits different settings and realities, be they social, educational, or religious. It is characterised by a particular care for the development, growth and empowerment of all people. The main characteristics of its “style” include altruism, the creation of a community of servants, empathy and a sense of ethics (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008).

Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2011) recognise that servant leadership is a holistic approach to empowering individuals and communities to grow and achieve their fullest selves. It is a holistic and altruistic vision that focuses on the commitment to serve others. This motivation is intrinsic

and is experienced in a profound interest and commitment, lived from a foundational spirituality. It is a vocationally grounded conviction.

There are many aspects that can be applied to the broad field of Marist life and mission. If we relate the spiritual, moral and ethical foundations of leadership to the educational and evangelising settings of our institutions, we are prompted and challenged to take bolder action. We want to make a difference in the lives of children and young people, their families and communities. We long to create the conditions for their personal transformation, for transformation in their living conditions, in their education, in their faith and in their spirituality.

Some questions emerge that seem important: What kind of leadership is needed to help solve the world's most pressing problems? How do we contribute to the empowerment of individuals or neighbouring communities? What do we do to give prominence and "voice to the voiceless"? How do we promote quality education for all? What is our contribution to the great dilemmas of our time? How do we offer solutions to climate change, resource scarcity, realities of poverty and marginalisation? How do we strengthen a culture of rights and protection? What kind of virtues should accompany us in that leadership?

Marist leadership, every Marist, has a great purpose ached of it. We commit ourselves to prophetic and servant leadership, which we understand as an ongoing process, marked by a conscious choice to "serve and serve first". This leadership inspires us to create community and develop relationships; to live and lead with a sense of transcendence; to nurture our vision and values; to communicate; to be flexible and adaptable; to engage with local realities (Marist Brothers of the Schools, 2018). There is our vision as leaders.

Now, at the end of this introduction, it seems appropriate to pose a fundamental question, for each of us, which can accompany us in our

reading of all the following essays:

What difference do I want to make and what kind of leadership do I want to live?

In answering this question, we want to start from some important convictions, namely: you can make a difference; there are issues which are important in themselves, your position in addressing them is less so; your contribution is necessary; communion with others multiplies and increases influence therefore actively seek to converse, dialogue and propose in conjunction with others. Together, you will create a culture of service and prophetic action for the benefit of people, especially children and young people.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What elements of servant leadership are most important to me in fulfilling of my role?
2. How do the examples of Jesus and Mary help me to live out?
3. What aspects or characteristics of my/our leadership need to be renewed or revitalized?
4. How do I help create the conditions for a culture of empowerment, service and full human development?

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CHAPTER 2



The Importance of Presence in Marist Leadership

Br. Ernesto Sánchez Barba
Superior General

Presence, good example and love are key elements in our style of educating.
(C. 52)

I was six years old when I started school at the Marist college in Guadalajara. The principal of that primary school often comes to mind, waiting at the entrance in the morning, greeting us, often calling us by our names. The same person who, a few minutes later when classes started, stood up in front of hundreds of silent, well-disciplined students to say a prayer, to encourage us, or to pass on some information. Without doubt the presence and closeness of each teacher were important to us but how much more so when it concerned the principal. At that age we couldn't imagine how much work was involved in being leader of a school with so many students, but we could appreciate the closeness and brotherly gestures, combined with the respect we felt towards authority.

Without doubt, on more than one occasion, our former students have reminded us of an anecdote or detail of our relationship with them. It is fascinating to realize that, although we do not remember it or were not aware of it, that detail was very significant for those people. In the Marist style of leadership, presence is of key importance. I would say essential. It is one of the characteristics that has defined us since the origins of our Institute.

We are aware of the historical moment in 1817 when Father Champagnat began our Institute, only a few months into his first ministerial assignment at La Valla. We can imagine this young 27-year-old curate exercising his priestly service across that far-reaching parish and, at the same time, welcoming and accompanying the first Marists in the house of La Valla. At a certain point, Marcellin recognizes that, despite giving much of his time to the animation of the brothers' house, spending with them whatever breaks and moments his ministerial duties allowed him, it was not enough to truly accompany this nascent community of religious educators. So, moved by the great affection he felt for his brothers and by the need to be more present in his accompaniment, he decided to go and live with

them. When he told the parish priest, the latter spared no effort to dissuade him ... Marcellin was aware that, by living in community, he would have to endure poverty, deprivation, and the sacrifices inherent in religious life and this was precisely what drove him the most. to live with them. He knew that becoming one of them, practising himself what he told them, would be the best way to inspire them through his vocation. So, having received permission, he left the presbytery to make his home with the brothers (Furet, 1989).

This action by our Founder has marked us from the beginning. We have inherited a leadership style whereby, before thinking about ourselves, we think first of the project that God has written in our hearts and of the people entrusted to our care. This young priest left us one of the best legacies: the presence of an authority at the service of others. Undoubtedly a clear reflection of what he himself lived interiorly as an experience of God, who *pitched his tent among us* (cf. Jn 1:14).

Presence: one of the Characteristics of our Marist Educational Style

*Through our lives, and by our presence,
these young people, their families and the communities to which they belong,
come to know they are personally loved by God.*
(C. 4)

Our document *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat (IFMC)* mentions the particular characteristics of our educational style: *presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and following the way of Mary.* (n.98)

The text offers a simple but complete explanation of presence: “We educate above all through being present to young people in ways that show that we care for them personally” (IFMC, n.99); “we seek to immerse ourselves in the lives of the young ... in school ministry, we

seek to extend our presence through free-time, leisure, sports and cultural activities, or whatever means offer themselves” (IFMC, no.100); presence which “seeks to be neither obsessively vigilant nor negligently *laissez faire*” (IFMC, no.101); presence which is pre-emptive, which offers advice and prudent care, we try to be firm and demanding in a respectful way while remaining optimistic and focussed on their personal growth (IFMC, no.101); “through our way of being attentive and welcoming, of listening and engaging them in dialogue, we earn the trust of young people and foster their openness” (IFMC, no.102).

The Marist Brothers’ *Rule of Life*, entitled *Wherever You Go* (RL, 2021), describes the pedagogy of presence as follows:

*Go out to meet children and young people
where you find them.
Draw close to them, taking an interest in their lives
and welcoming them into yours.
Journey with them in their struggles, their searching, their suffering.
Be a brother to each of them:
close, accessible, human.
You will win their confidence by your attentive and hospitable presence,
create a climate that facilitates dialogue in their education
and integration in their personal growth.
(n. 85)*

Our *Constitutions* (2021) express an important nuance in relation to presence: “Through our lives, and by our presence, these young people, their families and the communities to which they belong, come to know they are personally loved by God” (no.4). We are invited to be a presence which witnesses to and facilitates the encounter with God.

Presence among young people enables us to better connect with the ideals and concerns of their generation and promotes close and respectful relationships. It is a welcoming presence that encourages their

growth and engagement. It is a presence that empowers them, bringing out the best in each one. Think how much a word of thanks or appreciation means to someone, especially if it comes from the leader.

Throughout our Marist history, the pedagogy of presence has been assimilated and developed by educators and those who take on the service of leadership. It is one of the distinctive elements of our Marist spirit and our educational activities. It is a tradition that we receive through writings and reflections, but above all through the witness of Brothers and Lay people who have passed on their experience to us and who encourage us to live it.

Presence and Leadership

*By putting on the apron of brotherhood,
your specific vestment in the liturgy of life,
you join your service to the mission of God.*
(RL, 70)

The XXII General Chapter, held in 2017 in Rio Negro, Colombia, invited us to embrace a *prophetic servant leadership which closely accompanies Marist life and mission* (Message of the XXII General Chapter) and suggested *promoting close personal accompaniment on all levels*.

During the Synod on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, in October 2018, I clearly perceived in Pope Francis some important traits about the presence of a leader. I remember the first day of the Assembly meetings when, surprisingly for me and surely for so many others, Pope Francis stood by the door to personally welcome and greet each of the participants: a brief handshake, smiling, asking each one who she or he was and where they came from (with the souvenir photo, of course). And this was not limited to just the first day. Whenever there was a general assembly, the Pope was present at the entrance to the hall, available

to greet or to chat for a moment, and the same happened during the morning or afternoon breaks in the great hall where we had coffee. It was also remarkable to see him interact with the forty young participants in the synod: he chatted, listened to them, joked with them, allowed them to take “selfies”, smiling. At the same time, he challenged and inspired them to participate actively, encouraging them to be themselves and to express themselves clearly.

During the assembly sessions at the synod, we listened to each of the participants for 4 minutes (it should be remembered that we were more than 280 participants, hence the time limitation). The Pope had at hand the text of each speech, he listened, he read, he was always attentive. I must admit that some mornings or afternoons became tiresome when listening to so many talks one after the other (thank goodness the Pope insisted on three minutes silence after every five talks). On one of the occasions when I spoke informally with the Pope, I asked him, among other things, if it was not difficult for him to listen to so many and such diverse speeches during several hours successively through the day. He answered me simply: “No, not at all, I am very interested in listening to the thoughts and what is happening in so many different parts of the world.” It was impressive to see his energy, availability, and attention.

By way of these anecdotes, I wish to draw attention to how a leader like Pope Francis made himself present through gestures that expressed closeness and attentive listening. At the same time, when he spoke formally it was powerful to hear his prophetic, direct, and challenging voice. A clear example of the *prophetic and servant leadership* that has become evident throughout his pontificate.

At the beginning, I wrote that Marcellin’s attitudes were, without doubt, a clear reflection of what he himself lived interiorly as an experience of God, who “*pitched his tent among us*” (Jn 1:14). If we look at Jesus and the various ways in which his presence is manifested in the Gospel, we can use them as a reference for our leadership. He was present among the

people, with concrete gestures of welcome and closeness: he sympathizes with the leper, touching him with his hand and curing him (Mk 1:40); he approaches Simon's mother-in-law, who was in bed with a fever, takes her by the hand and lifts her up (Mk 1:30-31); next to Jacob's well, he dialogues with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-39); he let the children draw near to Him (cf. Mt 19:13); he and his disciples sit at table in Matthew's house with publicans and sinners (Mt 9:10); in the passage of the calming of the storm he invites us to have faith and not be afraid (Mt 4:40). We know of the time he spent with his disciples, present among them as the one who serves (Lk 22:27). When he finished washing the feet of his disciples, he said: I have given you an example, so that you too may do as I have done for you (Jn 13:15). The leadership of Jesus and his way of being present is an ongoing reference for those who are called to the service of authority.

Marist leadership, based on Christian leadership, reveals itself as serving presence – care in relationships with others, beginning with listening to and understanding the various realities, always giving first place to the person. Perhaps this is what we ourselves have experienced directly in our own relationship with Jesus, feeling so many times his close and compassionate presence, especially in difficult times.

Be a Meaningful Presence

*(Marcellin) hitched up his soutane and with determination
cut the stone needed to build the Hermitage.
He was a tender leader who was straightforward,
firm and equitable.
(RL, 84)*

As I expressed earlier, we have a rich Marist tradition in relation to the theme of a pedagogy of presence. It is a practice that we can continue to deepen and enrich based on our experience and reflection.

In our relations with others, we communicate values not so much by what we say or do but above all by who we are. By way of our demeanour, our presence conveys in itself an entire message. In a particular event or situation, on an important occasion, or in times of difficulty where solidarity is called for, the mere presence of the leader speaks for itself.

Language describes presence by the use of the verb to be, whose etymology (in Spanish) comes from Latin, and is related to the Latin ‘in stare’, that is, being there, but in a significant way. The act by which someone’s presence becomes concrete is the manifestation of what this person is. (Martinez, 2014, p. 93)

At different events and gatherings, you might hear people saying, with reference to the leader: “look, she has come” or “isn’t it great that he took time to be with us”. Or, when it is not possible to count on his or her presence: “we would have liked him/her to attend”. Expressions such as these partly reflect the importance of feeling the presence of the leader.

In addition to significant events and gatherings, it is important to be present and express closeness to those who are sick or in difficulty, in times of personal crisis or the loss of a loved one, or occasionally ‘wasting’ time informally with our work colleagues and among young people. There are so many ways to be present, even when it might not be possible physically: a phone call, a written greeting or message of congratulations, a gift, a greeting via a voice message, or a short video. The digital world today allows us many ways to make ourselves present. This time of pandemic has favoured the use of digital media to communicate and feel closer. These media help to lessen distances and facilitate the presence of the leader.

It must be said also that someone, while present, can be perceived as absent ...

... Presence and absence can be experienced at the same time, although to a different extent. We are not always where we are. We do not always live in the present but are often worried about and tied to the past, or anxious about and pulled by the future. In other words, we tend to be absent, because presence is only possible when we are here and now. (Martinez, 2014, p. 98)

The range of ideas and stimuli that surround us is ever increasing, including the digital world. These all take us away from the present moment and limit our capacity to give it our full attention.

The kind of presence expected of a leader is one that encourages and motivates, that brings out the best in each person and gratefully acknowledges the efforts and actions of others. It is a presence which is attentive and sensitive to different ways of being and cultures, which shows acceptance, respect, and appreciation. “Gestures, a smile, language, expressions of affection are important, but what is decisive above all are the light and warmth that spring from the interior” (Bocos Merino, 2016, p. 71). *Presence, time, and friendliness* are three interrelated dynamics which distinguish leadership in religious life. They are exponents of communion, dedication, and goodwill in helping people in their life and mission (Bocos Merino, 2016).

Starting with the attitudes that we project, it is good to reflect whether they communicate peace and harmony or distraction, concern, and even anxiety. When the moment to listen arrives, are we able to put aside thoughts, emotions or concerns, to offer an attentive, friendly and empathetic ear? This exercise is not always easy. We need to be aware of our own state of mind and, at the same time, to attune our ‘receptors’ as finely as possible to listen, welcome, and offer effective feedback.

The Importance of Connecting with Yourself ... to be able to Connect with Others

*Learn to cherish silence and the interior life.
Both will help you grow in intimacy with God
and to develop a deeper love for your brothers and sisters.*
(RL, 58)

To live presence in a meaningful way, it is important that the leader continually practises interiority, by being aware of the present moment. Today we have a wide range of supports to help us in this effort. It is a matter of living interiority, which goes hand in hand with spiritual growth. To be able to be really present, in the here and now, to recognise it as free gift, as a moment of grace. To experience the richness of the encounter, to be able to perceive the transcendent present in the other. As such, it is about trying to have an eye that sees beyond, that looks in depth.

The journey of interiority and of spirituality calls us to explicit moments of silence. This involves a practice which ends up becoming a habit of deep listening. It is necessary to exercise it, overcoming the difficulties that arise. Allow yourself to have a regular and constant space to silence yourself, letting your thoughts and feelings flow, without giving them attention or letting them worry you. And, in that silence, discern the voice of God present deep within us. We sometimes perceive that voice as a force, as a positive energy, that encourages us, and that, on many occasions, feels like the breeze that is barely perceptible, but deeply comforting (cf. 1K 19:12).

God is presence. In the spirituality that Marcellin passed on to us, the theme of the presence of God is central. He discovered it in events, in whatever place he was, in difficulties, when he prayed and when he celebrated the Eucharist with piety and recollection. “The way in which Father Champagnat practiced the exercise of the presence of God, consisted

in believing with a living and active faith in God, present in all things ...” (Furet, 1989, p. 324). And “it was as easy for him to recollect himself and remain united with God in the streets of Paris as in the forests of the Hermitage” (Furet, 1989, p. 325). Like him, *we are attentive to recognise the presence of God and to experience God’s love in the events of our life* (C. 45).

Living authority as a service of leadership brings with it moments of great joy and satisfaction and, at the same time, difficult situations that can easily impact the leader. There are often strong emotional charges which can accumulate and then lead to high stress levels. In the journey of interiority and spirituality, it is important for the leader to identify what he or she perceives in terms of feelings and emotions. To welcome it within the silence, without judgment, processing it and seeking to integrate it. There are times when the leader can feel that something is directed towards her or him personally, when in fact it is related to the role she or he plays. In this sense, as part of the journey to interiority, it is worthwhile having someone who helps to re-examine what is happening. In this way the leader seeks not to walk alone but to enlist the support of others.

A key element in maintaining inner peace and balance is the ongoing awareness of feeling missioned to leadership. Jesus always showed himself conscious of being sent: “*And the one who sent me is with me: he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him*” (Jn 8:29); *He who speaks on his behalf seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him, he is true, and there is no deceit in him*” (Jn 7:18). Unceasing reference to the one who sends us allows us to live in simplicity, to better accept our own vulnerability and that of others, and to recognise that true strength comes from Someone else, who is none other than the one who sends us.

Living in inner harmony, in unbroken contact with one’s self, sustained by a solid spirituality, allows the leader to be a serene and reassuring presence among others. How many times a kind look, a smile, even without words, conveys so much to those around the leader. That look expresses the attitude of a disciple, continually open to learning from

reality itself, from what is observed in others. We know that this cannot be improvised or faked but is the result of a process of endless learning.

Reading the Present Moment with a View to the Future

*Let the wisdom of the Word of God
enlighten your personal, communal and apostolic lives
and aid you in discerning the signs of the times.*
(RL, 29)

At the beginning of the XXII General Chapter, we consecrated several days to imagining and discussing what we saw as the present direction of different realities in the current world and to reflect on how they might evolve in the future. We relied on some of the steps of “Theory U” (Scharmer, 2016), which I don’t wish to fully describe here, simply to draw attention to one of the stages: that of being present (“presencing”).

Presencing is a combination of the words *presence* and *sensing* and is used to denote a heightened awareness that allows individuals and groups to recognise the place from which they presently operate, to imagine future change in behaviour and to adopt new approaches to the challenges they face. It necessitates seeing things from the deepest source of knowing and becoming an intentional vehicle for what is found there. When we suspend and redirect our attention, perception begins to emerge from a living process, connected to the whole. When *presencing*, our perception expands, future possibility draws us beyond the present, and the self and the whole connect. *Presencing* is viewing things from within the source where the future whole will emerge, looking at the present from the future, trying to discover who we really are as servants or administrators of what the world needs, and then acting accordingly (Senge et al., 2004)

I remember that, in this phase of the process during the Chapter, we were invited to spend a morning in silence, retreat and recollection. During that time, we sought to discern and listen within ourselves to the calls of God, asking ourselves two important questions in relation to our presence as an Institute in the world: what does God want us to be and what does God want us to do? It meant taking into account all the different elements of what we had talked about in the preceding days, discovering their meaning and listening deeply to the possible calls we felt to respond in the future. This personal time of silence in which each person sought to hear within themselves the voice and calls of God was significant. Also important was the time of sharing where each person expressed themselves and we listened to each other with openness. And so it was that, through this process of personal silence, dialogue and listening, the five calls were identified, the result of a collective reflection.

This experience, based on the *presencing* step, can offer us something new in relation to the subject at hand. We wish to live a presence that appreciates and reads the moment, that can identify its real meaning and the call that emerges from there and points toward the future. At times of self-reflection or group meeting and dialogue, empathetic listening allows us to try to interpret the clues to the present and future we perceive.

It is a way of reading the signs of the times, seeking to understand what is happening, its meaning and the calls behind it. Since the beginning of March 2020, we have lived through a difficult situation for the world, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic and post-pandemic situation, with all its consequences, encourages us to use in-depth reading keys to discern the signs of the times, endeavouring to discover the presence of God in these circumstances and, at the same time, asking ourselves how we can be God's presence in the midst of everything we live.

Conclusion: Presence with a Marian Face

Throughout what I have written, I have sought to propose some features of presence as it relates to our Marist tradition and our experience. In the service of leadership, the most important journey is the one each of us undertakes, learning continually, from our strengths and weaknesses. The theme of presence concerns our very being and the way we show ourselves to others.

All along Marist history, Marcellin, the Brothers and lay people, we have counted on and continue to count on Mary's inspiration. We bear her name as a continuous invitation to imitate her attitudes: "We look to Mary for inspiration and support. In welcoming her into our home, we learn to love everyone, and so become living signs of the Father's tenderness" (C 22).

She was a loving, educative presence throughout the life of Jesus, especially in his childhood. She was a serving presence to Elizabeth, staying with her for about three months (Lk 1: 56). When Jesus carried out his public mission, Mary was a discreet and silent presence. At times, she was an active and direct presence as in the case of the wedding at Cana (Jn 2: 3-5). Her way of being present among the disciples was reassuring after the death and resurrection of Jesus:

Like the first community at Pentecost, we are conscious of Mary among us. Her presence invites us to live as brothers and reminds us that we form the community of Jesus. Gathered around her, we undertake to build up a Church with a Marian face. (C 35)

We want to be present with a Marian face. We draw on the inspiration and experience of so many who have lived it this way and are currently living it. May our presence as leaders, at school, in youth ministry, in the community, in our families, in the Province or District, in

the Institute, be a continuous reflection of that Marian face. It is our gift and our commitment to bear the name of Mary.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is your personal experience of the pedagogy of presence?
2. What aspects would you highlight about presence and the way it should be practised by leaders?
3. As director of a ministry project, as a community or provincial animator, as someone who offers the service of leadership to whatever group, how do you appraise the quality of your presence?
4. What needs to be considered in order to live a close, compassionate, servant leadership that, at the same time, is prophetic and capable of challenging?
5. As a leader, what do you feel personally called to in relation to this question of presence?

ABBREVIATIONS

- C Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Brothers of the Schools (approved in 2020 and published in 2021).
- RL *Wherever You Go: The Marist Brothers' Rule of Life.* (2020).
- IFMC *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat.* (1998)

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PART 2

CHARACTERISTICS
OF PROPHETIC
AND SERVANT
LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER 3



What Type of Leader Do You Want To Be?

Br. Seán Sammon
Superior General (2001-2009)

All wars are vicious, bloody, horrifying. The US Civil War was no exception; over the course of four years, it took the lives of almost 750,000 people. Amid this carnage, however, there were examples of compassion and hope.

The battle of Fredericksburg is a case in point. On December 13th, 1862, Union soldiers, loyal to the government in Washington, DC, began a desperate and doomed assault on a heavily fortified position known as the “stone wall at sunken road.” Earlier in the day, they had taken the nearby town of Fredericksburg with little resistance; their confidence had grown.

These men, however, were unaware that members of the rebel army, loyal to the Confederate States of America, had willingly given up the town so that they might fortify themselves along a stone wall at the base of a sloping hill. Approaching the wall, the Union soldiers were mercilessly attacked. By the dawn of a new day, over 8,000 of them were dead.

During the night both sides could hear the cries of soldiers still alive but suffering from their wounds as well as the cold and thirst. A Confederate soldier stationed near the wall testified later that it was “unearthly, terrible to hear and bear the cries of dying men filling the air—lying crippled on a hillside so many miles from home—breaking the hearts of soldiers on both sides of the battlefield” (Clay, 2010, p. 1).

Amid this slaughter, Richard Kirkland, an infantry sergeant, and member of the Confederate army was unable to rest or sleep due to the suffering of the Union soldiers. Moved with compassion, he asked his commanding officer if he could scale the wall and provide water for the injured troops on the other side.

At first, he met with resistance. The commanding officer was worried about the danger that such activity would pose for Kirkland. Eventually, however, he received approval and set out on his mission.

As Kirkland scaled the wall, shots rang out. The Union troops thought that his motive was to wound more of them. However, after realizing what was happening, they stopped shooting.

Over the course of the next ninety minutes, Kirkland made his way to each soldier, comforting him as best he could, laying his jacket over one and providing water to the thirsty. He climbed that wall time and again using his canteen to get more water for those who were known to be his enemies. It was a moment that temporarily stopped the war.

Now, why tell this story about Richard Kirkland at the outset of an article on leadership? Surely not to romanticize the reality of war nor to suggest that simple acts of kindness are the best means for eradicating the violence and hatred that so often occur when people take up arms. After all, the heroic actions of Sergeant Kirkland, admirable as they were, failed to alter the ensuing years of conflict.

I tell the story, instead, to illustrate three characteristics that I believe must be present in genuine leaders: confidence; care and compassion; a spirit of service. After witnessing Kirkland's actions, was there anyone on that battlefield at Fredericksburg who would have been unwilling to follow him? Thought to be the enemy, he proved himself to be the absolute best of men.

What do we mean by leadership?

If you or I were to spend but a few minutes searching the internet for books and articles about leadership, we would quickly discover that their number is legion. Some deal with leadership in the business world, others in government, still others in the Church and other charitable organizations.

Many of us have also been exposed to workshops and seminars on the topic and all of us have had some first-hand experience with

leaders, either through our association with those given responsibility for a project or organization or by serving in a position of authority ourselves. All these elements have helped shape our understanding of what it means to lead.

With that said, it is important to remember that there is no one best way to lead. Styles of leadership differ from one culture to another, and different situations call forth certain characteristics in a leader. Some cultures, for example, are hierarchical in nature, others more egalitarian. Troops going into battle will probably more readily confer authority upon a decisive leader than upon one whose goal is to achieve consensus within the group.

Leaders and managers

Leadership also differs from management. Managers do things right; leaders do the right things. A traditional manager prioritizes projects and assigns them to people. For example, he or she may put into place a system that ensures that the trains run on time. Those of us who must get to work by a certain hour will be reassured by the presence of such a person overseeing the train system.

But managers usually are not the source of new ideas; leaders are. The latter, having curious minds, look to the future and envision what could be. An effective leader will be planning for the transportation system that needs to be in place twenty years from now.

The structure of many organizations hinders the development of leadership by failing to allow all involved to contribute to the work of planning and problem solving. The hierarchical structures found in these groups, coupled with the unequal status assigned members, interfere with the ability of all involved to have a say.

Robert Sutton, professor of Management Science and Engineering at Stanford University, points out that those charged with leading a project or institution are not always the source of innovation or of the best or latest ideas (Sutton, 2002). Who among us has not sat through a meeting where powerful people in the group held forth at length even though others in the room had much better ideas about how to solve the problem? If the field were level, more people might speak up and be listened to. Sutton suggested that one task of a true leader is to “figure out how to get certain people to shut up at the right time!”

Moral authority

The only real authority that exists is moral authority. The right to lead must be earned; it cannot be conferred. If you or I win the confidence of the members of a group, they will allow us to lead. However, if their confidence in you or me as a leader is lacking, our authority will be questionable. Given responsibility for a project, and discovering that others refuse to join us, makes the possibly of leading unlikely.

Authoritarian and weak leaders both lack moral authority. The first seizes power, using force or subterfuge to gain a position. Over time authoritarian leaders must put structures into place to help them maintain their power. They govern through fear and suspicion and by setting one member against another within the group.

Weak leaders fall at the other end of the spectrum. Their inordinate need to be liked or thought well of eventually takes precedence over the goals of the larger group. These men and women have little appetite for entertaining views that diverge from their own. Consequently, they may gather around themselves people who are overly agreeable and hesitant to share a contrary point of view. In the face of opposition, they can be quite vindictive.

In the long run, both authoritarian and weak leaders fail to win the confidence of those they are meant to serve. They also lack those characteristics found in leaders who possess moral authority. Over time, their behavior gives rise to resistance and leads to poor morale.

Confidence

Even with differences in culture and situation, there are certain characteristics that appear common among those who are effective leaders. To begin with, these men and women demonstrate confidence. New ideas do not threaten them; they are able to see possibilities that are not apparent to others.

Their sense of confidence also allows them to take risks. While not imprudent, they are open to moving ahead before every piece is in place and the answer to every question secured. Several terms are used to describe them: flexible, able to shift gears, comfortable with stepping into the unknown.

Luis Urzúa is a case in point (Kristof, 2010). He was the foreman for 33 men in 2010 when a collapse at the San Jose copper-gold mine in northern Chile trapped them 700 meters (2300 feet) below the surface. His level-headedness and gentle humor helped keep the miners under his charge focused on survival during their 69-day underground ordeal.

Urzúa was quick to recognize just how serious an accident had occurred. He took charge, looked at various options, and organized the men into watches, rationing food and maintaining order during the 17 days they were without contact from the surface.

Urzúa later made detailed maps of the area and remained flexible as he worked with the rescue team located on the surface. Remaining calm and cool under pressure, he was also the last man to be rescued, remarking, “It’s been a bit of a long shift.”

Effective leaders are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from those that they do make. More importantly, they can learn from the mistakes of others. Their confidence allows them to inspire others and to convince them that what appears to be impossible can, in fact, be accomplished.

On January 15, 2009, Chesley Sullenberger was faced with a crisis. He had just taken off from New York City's LaGuardia airport, piloting US Airways flight 1549, when his plane struck a flock of Canadian geese leading to the loss of all engine power.

Sullenberger and his copilot, Jeff Skiles, quickly made the decision that it was impossible to reach any local airport for an emergency landing. Instead, they glided their jetliner to a landing on the Hudson River just off midtown Manhattan. All 155 people on board were rescued by nearby boats, with few serious injuries.

Sullenberger and Skiles's feat became known as the "Miracle on the Hudson." A final report on the accident cited good decision-making and teamwork on the part of the cockpit crew and the performance of the flight crew during the evacuation as important elements in avoiding what could have been a disaster. The confidence demonstrated by Sullenberger and Skiles was contagious, inspiring both passengers and crew and convincing them that they could safely land and exit the plane without serious injury (US NTSB, 2010).

Care and compassion

Effective leaders also understand that the group is a source of wisdom. Refusing to take responsibility for generating every new idea, they look to bring out the best in others.

We all admire someone who can make a quick read of other people and identify their gifts as well as those areas that interfere with their being as effective as they might be. Rather than concentrating

on the latter, real leaders build upon the skills and talents found in the members of the team.

When people feel cared for, they are more than willing to give their best. A simple story illustrates this point. One day, a supervisor was meeting with a staff member. While they were discussing several important issues, the phone rang.

The supervisor ignored it. After three rings, the staff member looked at the supervisor and said, “Aren’t you going to answer the phone?” The latter paused and remarked, “No, I don’t know if that call is important or not, it can wait. What I do know is that this meeting is important.”

There are several lessons to be learned here. First, what you pay attention to and how you respond matters a great deal to other people. If you are constantly distracted while meeting with team members and others with whom you work, people will not feel valued. Furthermore, they may grow to mistrust you or fail to bring important issues to your attention.

Second, it does not take a great deal of effort on the part of a leader to let others know that he or she has their best interest at heart. Simple gestures such as asking people about their family, their health, or about the progress being made by a relative who has been ill, will let someone know that you value them for who they are and not simply for what they do.

Finally, we all make mistakes. It is good modeling for leaders to admit when they are wrong or have made a poor decision. It is equally important to be compassionate towards others when they do the same. Treating them with respect and kindness will accomplish a great deal more than trying to make them feel more guilty than they do already.

A spirit of service

Genuine leaders never forget that their role is to keep alive the vision that guides the group. If they fail to do so, no one else will. A spirit of sacrifice, and a desire to serve are essential elements needed to achieve this end.

The lives of very few men or women personify the cost of sacrifice and a spirit of service than does the life of Nelson Mandela (1994), South Africa's first democratically elected President. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., he was one of the great transformational civil rights leaders of the twentieth century.

Mandela was neither a politician nor an opportunist. He was, however, a man deeply committed to improving the lives of his people. His story is well known. Though acquitted of the charge of treason in 1956, he became convinced over time that armed struggle might be necessary to achieve real change. His involvement with the MK movement, an armed wing of the African National Conference, landed him back in prison.

In 1963 Mandela was sentenced to life in prison for political offenses. He would spend the next 27 years in jail, where he endured cruel punishment and contracted tuberculosis. During that time, Mandela was offered early release if he renounced armed struggle—a condition that he refused to consider.

In February of 1990, the now 72-year-old prisoner was released under South Africa's new President, Frederik Willem de Klerk, who helped broker a deal to end apartheid. One year later, Mandela was elected leader of the African National Congress. Shortly thereafter, he became South Africa's first black president following the country's first democratic elections.

Mandela entitled his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. An apt description of the cost often exacted for a life of sacrifice and a spirit of service.

Two final points

Lead by example

Effective leaders also model the behaviors that they are trying to develop in others. An often-told story about Gandhi, the leader of India's independence movement, illustrates this point.

There was a young boy who had become addicted to sugar. His mother decided to reach out to Gandhi for help; she and her son traveled for many miles under the scorching sun to reach him.

On arriving, the mother asked Gandhi to tell her son to stop eating sugar; it was not good for his health. He replied, "I cannot tell him that. But you may bring him back in a few weeks and then I will talk to him." Confused, the mother took her son home.

Two weeks later she returned. Gandhi looked directly at the boy and said "Boy, you should stop eating sugar. It is not good for your health." The boy nodded and promised that he would stop. Now puzzled, the boy's mother asked, "Why didn't you tell him that two weeks ago when I brought him here to see you?" Gandhi smiled and said, "Mother, two weeks ago I was eating a lot of sugar myself" (Reilly, 2008, p. 1).

Most of us can see through "leaders" who preach one thing and yet do another. We quickly lose respect for them and come to question the soundness of any advice that they might offer.

Don't let failure discourage you

In the world of animated films, Walt Disney is seen as a creative genius. The company that he established, the Disney corporation, is today an international entertainment giant, holding hundreds of properties, including Marvel Studios and the Star Wars franchise.

While many cite the success of Disney's earliest films, few understand the difficulties that he faced prior to making them. His first animation studio was dissolved when he was unable to pay the rent. Even though the film Snow White had a successful premiere, classics like Pinocchio and Fantasia were financial failures. Today many of Disney's earliest films are considered masterpieces, even though they were objective financial failures in their day.

What is to be learned here about leadership? First, the strength of an idea cannot be measured by its relative success or failure. Second, the next time you or I experience a setback, we should remind ourselves that we are in good company. Ask those who have been successful in achieving their goals if they have ever failed. Invariably, their answer will be "yes." For a true leader, failure is never the end of the road; it is, rather, another step on the long walk to freedom.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What qualities do you look for in a leader? What makes these qualities so important to you?
2. To help create a future for our Marist Institute, what type of leadership do we need to foster? What challenges will Marist leaders of the future face?
3. If you were asked to lead a Marist community or ministry within the next few months, how would you approach this ministry?

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CHAPTER 4



Leadership of Empathy, Service and Compassion

“Son, they have no wine”.

Br. Óscar Martín Vicario
General Councilor

When the XXII General Chapter speaks of “servant leadership”, it joins this expression to a positive dynamic that can pass unnoticed, but which is important....The phrase which is used is: “prophetic and servant leadership that closely accompanies Marist life and mission”. To speak of a leadership which “closely accompanies” is, in a rather subtle way, a declaration of principles and styleWe are referring to the leadership of companionship, of direct accompaniment, and of interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps for this reason, the paragraphs that follow speak of: being responsive to emerging calls from people, fostering inclusion, promoting the global family... Implicitly we find here a definition that is evocative of what Marist leadership is. It sheds light on our way of exercising this service.

For this reason, let us look at an aspect of leadership which is very relevant: the dimension of the service which comes to us by means of relationship, empathy and compassion. We need to ask ourselves how do we call forth and prepare leaders with this profile, who are truly focused on serving others, who share closely in all that is human, manifesting empathy towards everyone whom they accompany? Giving leadership this special “color”, includes certain attitudes, which perhaps were not traditionally associated with the function of leader, like compassion and even tenderness. (Pope Francis, 2020)¹.

To be a leader who decides to serve is already a challenge to the understanding of the concept of leadership, about which there has been a lot of reflection and much written (Greenleaf, 2002)². However, to be an empathic leader, who is close to others, an expert in the art of listening, attentive and also capable of expressing affection..., is a much wider and controversial dimension of leadership.

Nevertheless, in this we are at the root of how we understand leadership in our global Marist family, and it is how we desire to develop it. This is what we have received and inherited from our origins and from

our Founder. Empathy, service and compassion are not only “added” characteristics to our understanding of leadership, but are traits that are profoundly connected with our charism and with the Gospel foundations on which we stand.

To put the person at the center is to care for that individual (Prosser, 2007)³. To attend to another with empathy is a choice in the style of leadership in which we want to grow, and with which we want to build our relationships, structures and projects. This is what we have inherited and this is what we are trying to live today and how we want to conceive of our future.

1. From a Servant Leader to a Leader with Empathy

Even though there are many ways of expressing what we mean by empathy, there is a simple and popular expression which does so rather eloquently: put oneself in the shoes of another (Turú, 2012)⁴.

The leader who takes up this service is also called to be a person who can show empathy, given that his function is centered on the group and on the individuals whom he accompanies and serves. However, empathy is a characteristic which, even though some people can express it spontaneously, can also be learned and cultivated.

The good leader, who desires to serve and not to use his mission for his own purposes, has to possess not only a “technical” or “professional” capacity but also a relationship style. We understand that leadership must have this relational dimension that, far from being peripheral, in our days has become central for the mission of accompaniment and guidance. (Boies, 2020)⁵.

Leadership is relational by its very nature. To lead individuals and groups implies establishing a relational network with each person and with

the group, so that the best way of developing mission can be fostered, within a climate of positive interaction. This is evident in the simplest forms of leadership (from the class teacher to the trainer of a sports team) and it is also fundamental for very large businesses and institutions.

At the same time, for us, it is not only a “practical” characteristic, but rather a defining trait. Among the many characteristics which authors attribute to servant leadership, almost always included are aspects like ability to listen, empathy, knowledge, skill of persuasion, ability to explain concepts, commitment to the growth of the people involved, or to the construction of community. (Spears, 2010)⁶. Along these lines, we try to develop a style of leadership centered on service that is empathetic and close to others, not in order to achieve greater efficiency but rather because it emerges from our worldview, our values and our option for the individual and the centrality of the person.

We speak of empathy that can enter into the situation of another person and thus help to go to a deeper level so that questions or problems can be approached from a humanizing perspective (Campbell, 2020)⁷. Therefore, we are not talking about “using” empathy as a tool, nor of “pretending” to care for the other person, or “to put on a show” of comforting the other. We are seeking to understand that every institution or organism, formed by human beings, can only function well if the people involved find there the possibility of being themselves, of developing their capabilities and of placing their own potential at the service of the common good.

Empathy, then, means to believe to the people. At the same time, it involves listening to and guiding the other, especially taking into account the weaknesses of that person (Greenleaf, 2002)⁸. This does not at all imply hiding the truth but rather helping each one to encounter their own truth, their place in the scheme of things and the best of themselves.

Some authors, like Martin Hoffman, have spoken of different kinds of empathy: cognitive empathy, affective empathy, motivational empathy,

and pro-social empathy. We believe that this is an important contribution that clarifies matters. However, rather than “types of empathy”, we might understand them as dimensions. It is necessary to make connections on the level of ideas and reason, but also in the world of emotions. Empathy needs to become a focal point for motivation and a way of building group and social inter-relationships.

With all this, inevitably the question of how emerges. How to help leaders develop this empathic dimension in their way of being and acting? How can people be educated in the art of empathy? How can we convert our Marist institution and our leadership structures so that they become the “bridge builders” that they are called to be?

2. Empathy is Proactive

The etymology of “empathy” gives us the first key to respond to these questions. Empathy comes from the Greek “*ἐμπάθεια*”. This is a word which is formed by the prefix “en” (inside of) and the root “*pathos*” (affection, feeling, suffering). We could say that it is something that is experienced “in the feelings” or “inside the affections”. Empathy would then be something like “feeling with the other” or “sharing on a level of affectivity”.

As a contrast, it is interesting to look at the word “sympathy” which is formed by the prefix “*sin*” (meaning “with”) and the root “*pathos*”. It is almost literally equivalent to compassion (with passion). I believe that this gives us a key to understand the real scope and the greatness of empathy.

In a conference by an excellent young biblical scholar, the Spanish Capuchin, Victor Herrero, I remember that he explained the difference between compassion and mercy in the Bible. Even though both are wonderful and esteemed qualities, this expert said that compassion is reactive, as it comes forth when we see someone suffering or in pain and, like the good Samaritan, we feel compassion or a preoccupation and we react, “we

suffer with”. Mercy, much more than this, is not reactive but proactive. It forms part of who we are (in our very being, in the essence of God)⁹ and is a disposition, which is innate, un-learned and brought into action by love, pardon and understanding towards the other, before or without any necessity for the person having to do or suffer anything. People are compassionate but God, more than being compassionate, is, above all, merciful, total mercy.

In spite of the differences, empathy can also be situated in the sphere of proactive attitudes. Leaders can be or not be likeable; they may react in a more or less cordial or kindly fashion towards others. However, if leaders are empathetic, if they are proactively capable of putting themselves in the situation of the other, whatever that may be, their leadership has a more universal scope.

Faced with leaders who want to “manage” those they serve, or faced with manipulative models of leadership (Chul Han, 2017)¹⁰, those who truly wish to serve individuals or groups, are called to do so from a position of listening, understanding the reality of each one and be willing to place themselves at the service of the common good and invite others to do the same. In order to do this, the first and most necessary step will be to become aware of the individual’s potential. (Torralba, 2017)¹¹.

All of this makes us ask an important question: does the necessity of discovering and fostering empathy in our leaders necessarily mean that we must focus on the affective dimension (Altuna, 2017)¹², as the etymological root would suggest?

Whether leaders are friendly or not (hopefully friendly), and those whom they accompany are friendly too (then pleasant and cordial relationships can be established), but more than this, leaders must be sensitive to each one and establish empathic relationships with them all. This means that leaders are capable of putting themselves in the situation of the other and feeling with that person. This presupposes a

very active listening, understanding the other person in a rational way and also trying to share in his or her hopes, feelings and needs (Murray, 2019)¹³.

I always remember that when it was my turn to exercise the service of provincial, I had to learn with great humility to overcome temptations to impose myself and I learned to do something different: to listen more and try to put myself in the situation of the other person. I had to abandon prejudices and discover the riches hidden in the values and fragility of each one. I do not know if the big plans we had in those days stuck in the memory (like the “Plan for spirituality”, or the program for “Methodological change”). However, what would really please me is if the brothers would remember, and some certainly did, the many hours or entire days I spent listening during personal interviews, my repeated presence in each community, the individual accompaniment, or when I visited those who were in hospital, or those suffering some sort of loss or those in crisis. I recognize that often it was not easy to accomplish my intentions.

Empathy is proactive. However, it is learned and cultivated through such initiatives and actions. It is fundamental so that leadership really be a service. In the Life of Champagnat, we find that when he was a seminarian he sought out those who were discouraged or in difficulty, and that this attitude seemed to come naturally to him. He continued to put this into practice throughout his life (Furet, 1989)¹⁴ with particular sensitivity to the situation of each individual which he was able to detect and help those who were in need.

He was able to construct a style of “moral” leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992)¹⁵ which really served, rather than being merely institutional. It was a leadership that developed in fellowship and in an atmosphere of understanding, which is also very evangelical and very Marist.

3. Was Champagnat a Warm or Sympathetic Person?

I remember that in my first approaches to Champagnat, above all in the postulancy and novitiate, the figure of Marcellin seemed to me to be someone who was filled with courage and grit, however also serious and even a little distant. Probably this was an image that had not grown in depth but it took time and I had to start reading the letters, writings and current research on the Founder... in order to discover his great fatherly heart and his compassionate style of leadership.

The biographies and the various testimonies speak of a dedicated man, who was a guide and a reference point. He was “a tender leader who was straightforward, firm and equitable” (Rule of Life, 84).

Of course, the object of this article is not to delve into that and there needs to be a more meaningful and complete study in order to define exactly the character of Champagnat. However, it seems important to extract some element that might assist us in our reflection on leadership. We do not know with certainty if Champagnat was or was not a warm character, and that really is not so important ...however, there are some references which affirm that he could be an empathic leader (Torralba, 2017)¹⁶.

There are times when proposing someone to be Animator or Superior of a community, Director of an educational work, or even Provincial, we meet with some who honestly say that they do not have the necessary qualities for this service, and I have met such people. Among their supposed deficiencies, some speak of a lack of warmth, that they are not the most jovial or that they do not make a good first impression. Truly it is wonderful for a leader to be warm and friendly, as this can be a great help in his mission, but much more important and decisive is that he or she be empathic. By this I mean: understanding, willing to dialogue, capable

of putting oneself in the situation of the other person, and from this basis, capable of correcting when this is necessary (Campbell, 2020)¹⁷ as a way of helping each person to discover the best that they can be.

As we have pointed out, empathy is proactive but can also be fostered (Prosser, 2007)¹⁸. An attentive reading of the life of Champagnat seems to point us in this direction....As a young man, he did grow in moral authority in relation to his companions, but more and more he became an empathic leader, putting himself at the service of his brothers, going to live with them, listening to them and giving himself to them with generosity.

The constant effort to listen attentively is the way to develop empathy. Also, there must be dedication and consistency (Sánchez, 2021)¹⁹. There is more to it than finding leaders who have warm personalities (better if they are), as in the end we all prefer people who are able to develop close relationships, who are balanced and whom one can trust.

I cannot resist mentioning here the dialogue between Fr. Champagnat and Br. Laurent, as the former was walking to the village of Le Bessat, where he held his catechism class. It is wonderful to see how Champagnat, knowing the difficulties that the brother had, approached him, spoke to him, listening to him with great attention about his feelings, trying to place himself in Br. Laurent's situation, so they did not only share a journey but also Laurent's hopes and what was going on in his life. It is an excellent example, as I see it, of the empathy that Champagnat possessed even to the point of tears (Furet, 1989, p. 65):

“One Thursday, having stocked up as usual at Lavalla he was returning to Le Bessat (sic) with Father Champagnat who was headed in that direction on a sick call. The snow lay two or three feet deep on the ground and the roads were iced over. Br. Lawrence was carrying a sack containing a large loaf of bread, some cheese and a quantify of potatoes, his provisions for the week.

Although the Brother was strong, and the day was cold, because of the condition of the roads, he was sweating under his load. Noticing this state of affairs, Father Champagnat said to him:

- That's a difficult task you've got there, Brother.
- I beg to differ, Father. But it is not burdensome. It is extremely pleasant.
- I can't see how you can find it pleasant to scramble over these mountains week after week, trudging through snow and ice, shouldering a heavy load and risking a headlong fall into some precipice.
- I find it pleasant, because of my absolute certainty that God counts every step and that the pains we experience and the exertions we make for love of him, he will reward with an immense weight of glory.
- So you are quite happy, to teach and to catechize in this wretched part of the country and to carry your provisions on your back like a tramp.
- I am so happy in fact, that I wouldn't exchange my lot for all the wealth in the world.
- Well, you certainly have a high esteem for your task, but do you deserve to be given it?
- Oh no, Father, I am convinced that I do not deserve the favour of teaching catechism at Le Bessat; it is mine simply because of the goodness of God.
- All that you have said is true, but at least you have to admit that today is a very nasty day.
- No, father, it is one of the finest days of my life.

As he said these words his face blossomed into a smile and tears of joy stole down his cheeks. Father Champagnat, full of emotion and consolation at the sight of so much virtue, could scarcely suppress his own feelings”.

4. Leadership of Closeness and Compassion

The empathy of Mary in Cana, as she put herself into the situation of the newly married couple who were encountering difficulties, meant that she made her own their feelings. She acts very simply and does not put herself into the limelight. In this way she is an illuminating example. For this reason, we entitled this article, “They have no wine” (Jn. 2, 3), as it is a small but nevertheless eloquent example of servant leadership, which is close and compassionate.

The reference to this empathic woman, who is sensitive and aware of her own emotions, as well as being attentive to those of other people and to their needs poses some questions for us. She is ready to confront her own son with great freedom and without pushing her own agenda. Perhaps we have to begin by focusing attention on one’s own being, knowing and accepting one’s own feelings in such a way that makes it possible to open oneself to listening to the voices within and to the voice of God ... From here, learning to live for the other through the act of moving away from one’s centre and overcoming the tendency to refer to oneself, in order to make the person whom one is serving the important one.

Nevertheless, sometimes it is not easy to combine an empathic closeness to another person with justice and with the search for common institutional or organizational objectives. However, it is one thing to listen and to understand, and a different thing to lead and to enthuse, with profound respect, following a common project or search for group-objectives which are not always shared by each member.

I remember a number of situations in which, as the leader, it was my responsibility to balance respect for what one person was feeling or desiring and the plans of the community or the apostolic work in which we were involved. This is not an easy balance to achieve but it is very necessary, in order to avoid both becoming manipulative and not looking

after the needs of the individual. This would be to neglect one's task as guide and leader in an organization.

This opens us to a new dimension of leadership which complements very well what we are going to reflect on now: leadership of compassion.

Only a mature guide, who is aware of his or her own limits and fragility, will be able to exercise this compassionate leadership.... as only the compassion of the Samaritan allowed him to abandon his own plans (what the important people who preceded him did not do) and "lower himself" from his own mount in order to approach with compassion the poor, wounded man, at the side of the road.

In this way, leaders who allow themselves to get close to other people, and who show empathy "proactively" ...can also be compassionate in a reactive way, when they discover the needs and the difficulties of those whom they serve, placing themselves "at the service of others" (RL, 68).

As experts have pointed out empathy and leadership have a new dimension that is profoundly human but also spiritual. Of course, we are speaking of a dynamic that is far removed from paternalism or a false superiority but which does not fail to correct and can be stern when necessary, and make appropriate decisions when required (Groeschel, 2018)²⁰.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that both correction and giving direction are always more favorably received when they come from someone who displays friendship and respect. When necessary, compassion is also important. I can still remember a Brother who, in a particular situation said to me something like this: "I do not understand what you are proposing to us, nor do I share the modern approach of the Province.... however, if you respect me..... I accept, so let us go forward, even though I will go at my own pace".

Leadership of closeness and compassion was also exercised by Marcellin, especially with those who had the most difficulties. He was firm when he had to be and he took some risky decisions. Sometimes these decisions were unpopular ones (such as when he changed the “method of reading” or when he opted to use “the cloth stockings”). However, he knew how to combine this with understanding, listening or the ability to put himself in the position of the other person, even to the point of covering over the individual’s defects when it was right to do so. The end of this little scene shows that point very well (Furet, 1989, p. 466–467):

One evening the Brother sought out the Founder to tell him that he had made up his mind to go, no matter what might happen and that he would not remain even all next day, which was a Sunday. In fact, he left at five o’clock in the morning... At six o’clock that evening, the Brother returned...

- What, my dear friend you are back already? Oh, how pleased I am! What made you think of returning?
- Father, I went up and down all day looking for work
- Very well, my friend, no one in the house knows that you withdrew and non one shall know. Go and put your soutane again; be constant, and to make sure of this, give yourself entry to God.

To be close to others and compassionate is a necessary aspect of leadership, and is particularly meaningful in our own times. The difficulties and ruptures in our society and our world, which Pope Francis has powerfully reflected on in his encyclicals, *Laudato Si’* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), tell us that there are individuals, groups and whole societies that are truly fractured and very much in need of affection and support.

Equally the gaps caused in our institutions by the distance between generations, interculturality, the speed of changecreate insecurity for many brothers and lay people who might feel as if they have been excluded, or misunderstood and displaced. To these people especially, and to all those who feel that they have been left at the side of the road, we must offer

today a leadership with a friendly and compassionate face, which often combines “service and healing”.

5. With a Marist Style

Finally, even though reference to the Marist charism and to Champagnat permeates the whole of this reflection, it could be useful to focus on these more closely as some of our identity traits and tradition complement this leadership of service, empathy and compassion. We might call it a “Marist style”.

The Marian inspiration for our service to others is filled with attitudes that have already appeared in what has gone before, with different expressions or names. Contemplating Mary at the Visitation, in the house at Nazareth or at Cana..... we see an example that helps us in our way of caring, accompanying growth or giving guidance.

Servant leadership can be, in a certain way, enriched by ways of acting that are typical of the Marist tradition. These are not exclusive or determining but they do suggest a correlation between an empathic style of exercising leadership and the Marist style, which gives great emphasis to being in relationship, as well as having a familiar and fraternal way of relating.

- If we focus on Marist “simplicity”, we understand that empathic leaders are those who are capable of humbling themselves, of putting themselves into a situation side by side with the other person, and of being more like servants than the leading characters. Simplicity, applied to leadership, is very well described in our tradition and our documents. For example, our Rule of Life says this to the leaders of our communities: “When you are asked to take up the service of leadership, follow the example of Christ by serving your brothers with simplicity...Listen to them, encourage them, and discern with each of them....” (RL, 91).

- If we stop to ponder on “family spirit” we see that the already prominent relational dimension in leadership can be connected very well with the sense of informality in the Marist charism. We know that combining warmth with firmness, correction with assertiveness, healing with the search for growth is something that happens naturally within a familial context and this has always been a notable feature of the relationships within the various Marist contexts: communities, educational centers, fraternities, and social projects...
- Finally, if we think of the Marist feature of “presence”, we discover that it might be understood as an explanation of a way of exercising leadership which focuses on being close to others or being present. The Constitutions remind the leaders of communities, but this could also be applied to any leader: “The Community Leader, by his attentive and available presence, finds ways of uniting the community and ensuring that each one feels the support of the others. He fosters a climate of mutual help and understanding and encourages a spirituality that places Christ and a passion for the Reign of God at the heart of community life.” (C. 37).

With all of this, leadership is enriched and is perfected, and leaders become inspirational people, who help everyone more and more to grow and to commit themselves to the communal task to achieve the collective objectives (Subirana, 2011)²¹. Finally, leadership takes on the most human traits, the most evangelical, the most Marist in our case, in order to better serve others.

Moving away from our own particular situation, I would like to remind you of a well-known scene from the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Her address to a group of leaders at an international congress for business men and women has become famous. The topic was the architecture of change in St. Francis. She said to them: “Do you want change? Do you want your people to change? Do you know them? Do you love them? If you do not profoundly know the people who work for

you, there will be no understanding between you. Without understanding, there will not be trust. Do you love your people? Is there love in what you do? If there is no love in you, there will not be power or strength in your people. If there is no strength, there is no passion. Without strength or passion, no-one will take risks. Without taking risks, nothing will change”.

These words are full of wisdom, and they clarify these traits of empathy, closeness and affection with which we are defining servant leadership. It is interesting to see the points of Mother Teresa’s talk. Although it was directed towards business people and leaders at a high level, it connects with the essential elements of all servant leadership: knowing the people, offering understanding, generating trust, sharing a passion and in the end, loving.

We Marists understand servant leadership in the same way. It is made up of relationships and a family spirit, simplicity and presence. This is precisely our legacy from the man who, when speaking to teachers in the modest setting of a classroom, said, “to educate, first you must love”.

In our days, that phrase remains valid and we can broaden it saying that in order to walk with people, it is necessary to remain close to them and to be compassionate. In order to serve others it is necessary to empathize with them? It is necessary that “to lead, first you must love”.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is the relational aspect of leadership important and necessary? What can that dimension enrich for leadership as we experience it?
2. How do you understand the difference between a sympathetic leader and one who has empathy? How can empathy be fostered?
3. I have made reference to Champagnat as a leader with empathy.

- What can you suggest in order to throw light on present day Marist leadership?
4. What concrete applications could you suggest to foster a style of “leadership of familiarity”?
 5. What importance does “compassionate leadership” have for you? What is the role of feelings in the task of leadership?
 6. What type of relationships are necessary for a proactive style of leadership? What might this kind of accompanying of others look like?
 7. The leadership of Mary in some episodes is low-key, with few words ...however, it is very effective, (e.g. at Cana). What does this attitude suggest to you for leadership today?
 8. How can we exercise leadership in the context of the global Familythat maintains the spirit of family in those who are near but also has this global horizon?

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Notes

- 1 Pope Francis (2020) includes political leaders when he says one part of his mission is to care tenderly for the fragile: “To tend those in need takes strength and tenderness, effort and generosity” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 188). Further on, he adds: ““What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 194).
- 2 One of the greatest experts in this field, after much reflection and study, still asks the question: “Servant and leader: can these two roles be found in the one person?” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 21).
- 3 A leader is “someone who exercises care as well as guidance” (Prosser, 2007, p. 13).
- 4 “To look at the world from the perspective of the other person means that one is capable of putting oneself in the shoes of the other; to be willing to be deeply affected by that person; to understand, even though one does not always approve of their actions” (Turú, 2012).
- 5 Mario Boies reflects on empathy in the context of the pandemic: “Empathy is the capacity to identify with someone and to share that person’s feelings, placing himself/herself in the position of the other person in their personal circumstances. . . .” (Mario Boies, 2020, 121).
- 6 This is part of a list made by Larry C. Spears in “El Liderazgo servicial”, p. 36 (Ed. Blanchard and Roadwell). He also adds that the leader must be “a competent and empathic listener”. (Spears, 2018, p. 36). Translator’s note: if one puts the name of Larry C. Spears into an internet search engine, a great deal of information about him and his work will be provided in English.
- 7 “While empathy can paralyze some people (for example, in that it impedes them in making decisions), the servant leader is not at the mercy of empathy but can use it so as not to make hurried judgements about others. Empathy allows one to pass from the superficial to what is really going on.” (Campbell, 2020).
- 8 “The acceptance of people requires a tolerance of imperfection” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 34).
- 9 In Hebrew, there is not only one meaning given to compassion (“racham”) but it also includes goodness, constant love, grace (“hesed”), which are rooted in one’s entrails (“rehamim”).
- 10 In his classic work, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism & New Technologies of Power* (London & New York: Verso Books, 2017), Byung Chul Han, the Korean born, German professor, reflects with clarity on our society and on the new techniques of the power of neoliberalism to dominate and use the psyche. According to him, “we are made subject by an intelligent power without being aware of it. . . . The intelligent power directs the will of its subjects in its own favor”.
- 11 “Values reside in the person’s interior, and only grow and develop when someone has an awareness of what he or she has within, that is when the potential hidden within is grasped.” (Torralba, 2017, p. 137)

12 Many definitions of leadership “imply an affective dimension, beyond the cognitive: they talk about experiencing a compatible emotion in relation to the state perceived in the other person, even though the leader does not have exactly the same emotion as the other person, nor of course the same intensity” (Altuna, 2017).

13 Sr. Pat Murray, Secretary of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) considers that an application of “the Church moving outwards” of Pope Francis, is: “To see through the eyes of others is essential in order to obtain a more profound understanding, empathy and compassion than is possible by remaining within one’s own social sphere” (Murray, 2019).

14 “The moment he saw young brothers giving way to boredom or dejection, he left no stone unturned to help them conquer that temptation... Many brothers found by experience that a few minutes talk with him was all that was needed to dissipate all thoughts of sadness and discouragement (Furet, 1989, p. 271).

15 Sergiovanni, even though his focus was school, spoke about certain directives, practiced a model of leadership that was based on moral authority...even though at times this might not be recognized as leadership. However, for the “leadership that counts in the end, is that which ‘touches’ or affects people in a different way” (Sergiovani, 1992, p. 120).

16 “Empathy is more than amiability” (Torralba, 2017, p. 96.

17 An interesting line on leadership is: “Making an effort to accept and understand others, without ever rejecting them, however, sometimes refusing to accept that their actions are sufficiently good” (Campbell, 2020).

18 “Even though the practice of servant leadership can be learned, there are some who have the advantage of having been born with many of the necessary qualities” (Prosser, 2007, p. 21). Also: “One who is not naturally a person of service can change to become a genuine servant by means of a long and arduous discipline of learning how to listen” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 31).

19 The Superior General, Br. Ernesto Sánchez, recounts that he had the opportunity to ask Pope Francis: “What would you recommend to us, the leaders of our Congregations? The answer was: “The question is very wide, and I don’t really know how to approach it. However, a word jumps out at me while you have been talking: coherence... yes, something that came to me: coherence” (Sánchez, 2020, p. 90).

20 “Compassion is not the same as the feeling of pity and neither is it false paternalism” (Torralba, 2017, p. 171). We could add to this another wise opinion: “What is compassion in a servant leader? Compassion is not only a feeling, it is an action. It allows the emotion we are feeling to light a fire within in order to bring forth an action, and to motivate people so that they also might act (Groeschel, 2018, p. 125).

21 Professor Miriam Subirana writes: “There are people who, when they cross our path, inspire us. Their presence opens us up to another way of seeing things. Their example gives us hope that positive change is possible and their words gives us strength not to throw in the towel”. She adds, “A important work to develop for organizational leaders is to generate a culture in which the members can explore, experiment, increase their capacity, improvise” (Subirana, 2011, December 4).

CHAPTER 5



Leadership and Healing

Br. Peter Carroll
Provincial of Australia

Transform us, Jesus, and send us as a global charismatic family, a beacon of hope in this turbulent world to be the face and hands of your tender mercy. Inspire our creativity to be bridge-builders, to journey with children and young people on the margins of life, and to respond boldly to emerging needs. – Marist Brothers. XXII General Chapter, 2017

Now is the Time

For the past twelve months we have watched as the pandemic saw-sawed across the globe. There have been lulls and then spikes. Just when it seems to be under control there is a new outbreak. Even as vaccines are being distributed, emergencies are declared in parts of the world. At the moment deaths globally stand at over 3 million.

This experience crystalises a reality: we are vulnerable, fractured and damaged. Not just sometimes, but always. This is part of our human condition. We are a people who needs nurturing and healing.

Seamus Heaney's poem *The Cure of Troy* (1990) is an anthem of hope. It reminds us that "people get hurt and get hard" but that justice and healing are available, "believe in cures and healing wells", "a further shore is reachable from here". The "birth-cry of new life" is within ear-shot. But now is the time for action, there may be no other. Now is the time for "hope and history" to rhyme. Now is the time for peoples to reach out and address those situations and relationships that need our healing touch.

*Human beings suffer.
They torture one another.
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.*

*History says, Don't hope
On the side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.*

*So hope for a great sea- change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles.
And cures and healing wells.*

*Call miracle self-healing,
The utter self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
And lightening and storm
And a god speaks from the sky*

*That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.
It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.*

What in your world most needs healing?

Spiritual Leadership

I don't know if our world is more turbulent now than at other points in history, but it's certainly turbulent. Conflict between nations

and between different groups within nations. International rivalry and recriminations. Oppression of minorities. Growing economic inequality. Climate change. Environmental degradation. Incessant change. These are just some features of our world. Renowned organisational thinker Margaret Wheatley (2007) has said that in turbulent times the leadership that's required is spiritual.

No one can create sufficient stability and equilibrium for people to feel safe and secure. Instead as leaders we must help people move into a relationship with uncertainty and chaos. Spiritual teachers have been doing this for millennia. Therefore, I believe the times have led leaders to a spiritual threshold. We must enter the domain of spiritual traditions if we are to succeed as good leaders in these difficult times. (p. 126)

So let's start at the very source of our own religious tradition.

Jesus as Leader

Jesus was a remarkable leader. He was a person of insight, he spoke with deep knowledge and understanding, and acted with integrity. This was the foundation of his attractiveness, the reason people followed. Matthew tells us *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their scribes"* (Mt 7:29). Jesus was seen as a prophet, a "revealer figure" with *"more immediate access both to the Father and to lived reality"* (Brown, et al., 2000, p. 647) than their normal teachers. In today's parlance we would say Jesus was an ethical leader. He didn't preach one thing and then do something different. He modelled the very behaviour he spoke about. When Peter asked him, *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"* Jesus replied, *"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."* (Mt 18: 22). When Jesus is himself sinned against in the most grievous way what does he do? *"Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing"* (Lk 23: 24).

Jesus embraces and exemplifies even in his dying moments, particularly in his dying moments, the most challenging of his own teachings. As we would say today Jesus is one who walks the talk! Nor was he afraid to exhibit righteous anger at the appropriate moment. His reaction in the Temple tells us as much.

Jesus was a Leader who was close to his people. He wasn't robed in finery and isolated in the Temple or Synagogue. He literally walked with the ordinary folk. He talked about important matters in a down to earth way. He used everyday situations to explain his teachings. He celebrated, laughed and wept with people. He was accessible; his message was accessible. This wasn't appreciated by the Priestly class who asked his followers "*why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners*" (Mk 2: 16) while others accused him of being a "*glutton and a drunkard*" (Mt 11:19). But Jesus' reply was sharp and direct, "*Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.*" (ibid.).

His teaching on leadership was specific and clear:

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you *must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave*; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20: 25-28).

Chapter 13 in John's Gospel expresses the same teaching in very dramatic fashion. The "washing of the feet" makes it very clear that Christian Leadership is servant leadership.

What is the characteristic of the human Jesus you find most attractive?

Jesus as Healer

The recognition of humanity's need for nurturing and healing lay at the heart of Jesus mission. This is what he offered the people of his time, and continues to offer the world today. This is why his disciples left family and work to follow him. He offered something precious, and something attractive.

After John the Baptist was put in prison, he sent some of his disciples to Jesus to find out whether Jesus was really the Messiah. Jesus summed up his own ministry in his answer to John: *“Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor’*” (Mt 11: 4-5).

Among his contemporaries Jesus was renowned as a healer and exorcist. All Christian sources attest to that. Each of the four Gospels have narratives of Jesus healing. If we look at some of those stories we can learn about his unique style of healing.

Firstly, there is the encounter, often a request. *“...and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean’*” (Mt 8: 2). Jesus never refuses a request. He acts with understanding and compassion. It was this compassionate love that inspired Jesus and which the afflicted met in their encounters with him. In a very real and explicit fashion healing was Jesus way of loving. And his healing was totally gratuitous: he never asked for anything in return, not even for the individual to follow him. More often than not, Jesus' command was to go home and tell no-one.

Secondly, there are the words of healing; often, commands. They were always simple words. He didn't use exotic magical words which many other healers of the time used. His words addressed the issue directly: *“Be made clean”*. To the paralysed man he says: *“Stand up, take your bed and go to*

your home” (Mt 9: 6). Exorcisms were the same: *“You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again”* (Mk 9: 26). Jesus words gave hope and direction. They lifted spirits and removed barriers.

Thirdly, there was the gesture – often a touch. *“But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand”* (Mk 9: 28). *“He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?”* (Mk 8: 23). This was the key:

Jesus hands brought blessing to people who saw themselves as cursed, touched the lepers that no-one else would touch, conveyed power to people who were sinking into helplessness, inspired trust in people who felt abandoned by God, caressed people excluded from human contact. It was his way of healing. (Pagola, 2002, p. 167)

While these were three physical aspects of Jesus healing, there were other factors at work. He wasn't concerned only with their specific affliction, but with the broader conditions in which they lived. The majority of the healing narratives address issues that transcend the physical and point to Jesus' attempt to restore the whole person. This is reflected in the fact that more than half of the healing narratives deal with the marginalized of society during Jesus' time. He healed demon possessed persons, beggars, lepers, women suffering from incurable diseases, and those who were racially discriminated against by the Jews. Other healing narratives deal with the understanding of faith, the message of forgiveness, and the meaning of the Sabbath. The healing ministry of Jesus shows Jesus' commitment to restore the whole person to God and not focus on a single dimension of healing.

Jesus was offering more than a physical improvement. His healing action went beyond the elimination of an organic

problem. Curing the organism is part of a more integral healing of the person. He was rebuilding sick people from the bottom up: building their trust in God, drawing them out of isolation and despair, liberating them from sin, restoring them to the heart of the people of God, opening to them a fuller, healthier life. (p. 167)

Jesus' healings weren't isolated acts, they formed part of his overall message – the proclamation of the reign of God. God is here – now! God's mercy is available – now! This was something new, and Jesus' healing was testimony to it.

The healing narratives indicate that there was one over-riding condition for Jesus' healing to be effective: a trusting relationship. Without trust Jesus' healing was frustrated. This is evident in Mark's Gospel where we are told that Jesus could do very few "deeds of power" in his home village of Nazareth because of the lack of faith he encountered there (Mk 6:2-6). By contrast, when they trusted and were cured, Jesus openly attributed it to their faith: "Go, your faith has made you well" (Mk 10: 52).

In a broader sense Jesus healed by awakening faith. He brought God's love and blessing, forgiveness and mercy into the lives of the afflicted. He opened to them the possibility of living with a new heart, reconciled and at peace with God.

His healing also restored these people to their communities from which they'd been alienated. Jesus eliminated the barriers that kept them isolated from society. Their healing was complete when they were re-integrated into the community. This social dimension of Jesus healing was most significant.

What is your favourite Gospel story of Jesus as a Healer? Why?

An Undivided Life

Jesus made it clear that his disciples were also to be healers: he *“called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal”* (Lk 9:1-2). Later he instructed the 72 to *“Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’”* (Lk 10: 9).

Equally Jesus’ followers today must also be concerned with healing. We are called to be agents of healing and to facilitate healing wherever we can. In our context, physical healing isn’t necessarily our central focus, but it can be part of it.

Jesus was able to heal because he himself was whole. So there is significant work for the Christian to undertake in ensuring she or he is moving towards wholeness. As the old saying goes, *“you can’t give what you don’t have”*. We need to start with our own brokenness and fragility and we need to be serious about our own journey to an undivided life.

Thomas Merton was insistent that we co-create our identity with God. *“Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny”* (Merton, T., 1961). He wrote extensively about our true and false selves:

Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self. This is the man that I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him. ... My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside the reach of God’s will and God’s love — outside of reality and outside of life. And such a life cannot help but be an illusion. ... The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God. ... Therefore I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in him. ... Therefore there is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my

happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him, I will find myself, and if I find my true self I will find him. (p. 34-36)

To know this truth, Merton wrote, we are to “*pray for our own discovery.*” St Bonaventure suggested that a lack of self-knowledge leads to distorted knowledge in other areas. So the quest for wholeness begins with self-knowledge. Similarly Parker Palmer (1998) writes that a leader “*must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside his or her own self, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.*” (p. 187-208)

It’s been said that “*we heal from the inside out*”, but it can be a slow process. This is a deeply spiritual journey that must be undertaken with honesty and trust in God. Solitude, silence, prayer and reflection are essential. Jesus guides us along the path. At times we may need to return to moments in our lives that are still sources of distress or hurt. We may need to embark on a process of healing specific memories or addressing issues that have arisen and keep on arising from past events. This is when it’s important to have an external guide, such as a supervisor or spiritual companion (director).

How do you attend to your personal brokenness?

Wounded Healers

Healing is defined as the restoration of wholeness, well-being and safety. Since we are imperfect humans and our relationships and communities are composed of frail humans, healing is a process that is required constantly. Leaders have a special role to play in facilitating healing. Robert Greenleaf (2002) wrote extensively about servant leadership and he noted that such leaders are “*healers in the sense of making whole by helping others to a larger and nobler vision and purpose than they would be likely to*

attain for themselves” (p. 240). In the same tradition Shann Ray Ferch (2011) emphasises that “*A hallmark of servant leaders is that they heal others, and they do so through mature relationship to self, others, and God*” (p. 72).

Thus healing is the commitment to and capability of making whole oneself, others, organizations, and relationships. Using the term he made famous Henri Nouwen (1979) wrote that Christian leaders are wounded healers, “*who must not only look after their own wounds, but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others*” (p. 88).

The Rule of Life for a Brother, *Wherever You Go* (Marist Brothers, 2020, n. 46), expresses beautifully the need to attend to our own personal woundedness.

*Along with your personal qualities
that lead to love and help you to build fraternity,
you, like all of us, have tendencies
that can give rise to individualism and rivalry.*

*You are called to heal your wounds, accept your limits, purify your desires.
Work to overcome selfishness;
purge resentments from your heart (Mt 5:23-24).
The Lord walks with you on this journey of conversion reminding you:
“My grace is sufficient for you;
my strength is shown in your weakness” (2Cor 12:9).*

What qualities does the wounded healer bring to leadership?

Facilitating Healing

If we return to Jesus’ way of healing we can identify some dispositions that are helpful in facilitating healing.

The first is love. It is foundational. Jesus healed because he loved.

Similarly, to facilitate healing, to be an agent of healing you need to want what's best for the other. This may require seeing beyond external behaviour at times and setting aside our own judgements. We need to be motivated by respect for each person, irrespective of their personality, attitudes or actions.

The second is trust. Relationships of mutual trust are the context in which healing may be possible. Cultivating trust takes time and deliberate effort. As human we are predisposed to trust but there are signs that's being eroded in our contemporary world.

In these days of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' we are moving away from that default position of trust, and becoming inherently more suspicious. The result is that leaders have to work harder to gain trust. (Dolan, G., 2019)

Honesty, openness, respect and tolerance help to underpin trusting relationships.

Then there is the encounter. The meeting of people in a trusting, respectful fashion. In Fratelli Tutti (FT), Pope Francis (2020) has suggested encounter as a remedy to many of our world's ills. He writes:

Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter. I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions... To speak of a "culture of encounter" means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life. (n. 215-216)

Such encounters are a means of healing in themselves. An openness to dialogue and a capacity for genuine listening are prerequisites to meaningful encounter. The Pope goes on:

In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to

heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter. (n. 225)

What are the words of healing that need to be heard today? We know that words are powerful; they can build up or they can undermine; they can encourage or deter; affirm or hurt. We need to select our words carefully; we can't afford to be callous. Speaking to the Curia some years ago Pope Francis (2014, Dec. 22) warned against the disease of gossip, backbiting and complaining. He said:

I have already spoken many times about this disease, but never enough. It is a grave illness which begins simply, perhaps even in small talk, and takes over a person, making him become a “sower of weeds” and in many cases, a cold-blooded killer of the good name of our colleagues and confrères. It is the disease of cowardly persons who lack the courage to speak out directly, but instead speak behind other people's backs... let us be on our guard against the terrorism of gossip!

Contemporary leadership literature speaks of the need for ‘challenging conversations’, in which significant, potentially sensitive issues are raised and employees are asked to address areas that need improvement. Such honesty is necessary, but these conversations don't need to be brutal. They can be conducted in such a way that the needs of the group and the wellbeing of the individual are the priority. Words that affirm, encourage, elicit the best in others – these are the ones that have the power to heal.

Finally, the gestures of healing. We can talk as much as we like, but until we follow in Jesus footsteps, and match our actions to our hopes and words we will not be facilitators of healing. Health science has something to teach us. A short article from Advocate Health Care (2017), entitled *When Trauma Happens, Love Heals* reminds us of the power of warm human relations:

Research shows that simple acts of kindness and caring can heal our brains, bodies and spirits and even protect us from stress. Loving kindness, trust-worthy relationships, a sense of meaning and purpose, rhythm and ritual actually help to re-wire our brains and ease the release of toxic hormones that can create chronic disease... Fostering healing and protecting our children from the effects of violence, abuse, neglect and other traumas can be quite simple.

Respectful listening, genuine collaboration, comforting actions, appropriate celebration and simple affirmation are some of the gestures than can help restore confidence and mend relationships.

Can you identify a relationship that needs healing?

How might you facilitate its healing?

The Gift of Forgiveness

To be a Christian Leader is to promote healing and work for peace; forgiveness is an essential element in this process. There are wonderful stories of forgiveness that accentuate the healing that it brings. When Martin Luther King Jnr was stabbed by a disturbed woman, he said to those who were restraining her *“don’t do anything to her; don’t prosecute her; just get her healed”*. He recognized that such violence is an expression of illness and that the best response was to help the woman recover her sense of dignity. Following the collapse of the Apartheid regime in South Africa the democratic government of Nelson Mandela established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The purpose of the Commission was to bear witness to, record, and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, as well as offering reparation and rehabilitation to the victims. Archbishop Desmond Tutu who had himself suffered during the Apartheid years was, with Nelson Mandela, a vocal proponent of this approach. He said that the country needed to move beyond retributive justice to restorative justice, to move on to forgiveness,

because without it there would be no future. He argued that forgiveness was needed not only for the sake of the perpetrators, but also in the best interest of those who had been offended against. *'We are humanity in one. Whenever we dehumanize others, we dehumanize ourselves'* (Tutu, 1999).

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis (2020) comments on the importance and the challenge of forgiveness. However, he reminds us that to forgive is not to forget:

Those who truly forgive do not forget. Instead, they choose not to yield to the same destructive force that caused them so much suffering. They break the vicious circle; they halt the advance of the forces of destruction. They choose not to spread in society the spirit of revenge that will sooner or later return to take its toll. Revenge never truly satisfies victims. (n. 251)

If we are to truly serve and bring healing to others, we have to learn to forgive and ask for forgiveness from others.

In the final months of his life before succumbing to pancreatic cancer, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin set down his reflections on his last years, which included some traumatic personal events. These reflections were published posthumously as *The Gift of Peace*. In this very personal memoir, the Cardinal testified to the healing power of peacemaking and forgiveness. He saw this as an empowering gift of God's love. In the book Bernardin describes his reconciliation with Steven Cook, the man who had falsely accused him of sexual abuse. Steven was dying of AIDS, and at their meeting he offered an apology that the Cardinal described as simple, direct, and deeply moving. For his part Bernardin offered Steven a gift, a Bible in which he had inscribed words of loving forgiveness. Then he showed him a hundred-year-old chalice, a gift to Bernardin from a man he did not even know, but who had sent him the chalice and asked him, one day, to celebrate Mass for Steven Cook. That was to be the day.

Word and sacrament opened both their eyes to the deeper significance of the gifts of peace and forgiveness. Bernardin described that meeting as the most profound and unforgettable experience of reconciliation in his whole priestly life. (Holyhead, 2008, p. 69)

Many other witnesses show us that forgiveness is possible – difficult, messy, but possible.

Not only do we need to forgive, but we also need to ask for forgiveness. This is often the more difficult undertaking, however it can be a most powerful experience. As leaders none of us have a perfect record in our actions and decisions. We make mistakes. We don't consult as we should. We can become biased and unbalanced in our considerations. Our ego can easily intrude. If we are to be agents of healing then we must also seek the forgiveness of those we have treated unfairly or with too little regards. A Leader who asks for forgiveness can make a significant impression.

Recall an occasion on which you have forgiven another. Recall another occasion on which you've asked for forgiveness. How did the experiences differ?

A Cautionary Tale

Many of us have witnessed the tragic consequences of child sexual abuse. Many of us have been embroiled in the events that have unfolded within the Church and our own Institute in recent decades. Many of us have met with victim-survivors as they've recounted their abuse and the devastating effects it's had on their lives, their relationships and their loved ones. A particular difficulty is balancing our desire to be compassionate towards the survivor, with our need to extend support to one of our Brothers who has offended or is alleged to have offended. Often we will face criticism from one party, if not both. What's even more challenging is that the truth, as in evidentiary material used to establish fact, is often very

difficult to discern. There is no simple answer and no instruction manual. We learn only by travelling the path, by reflecting on the experience, seeking advice and praying for guidance. In the end, it is the Leader who must make the decisions.

Our Church and Institute have learned in all too painful ways that we need to break down the silence that has surrounded these events. We have to listen to the victim-survivors. We have to hear of their pain and often their anger. We also need to overcome our past tendencies to minimise or worse, deny, that such abuse has occurred. If we commit to looking at issues through the eyes of the survivors, we will see things very differently. Breaking down silence and denial is essential for healing.

However, we can't mandate healing. We can hope and pray for it. We can establish environments that are conducive to healing. We can't dictate it, just as we can't demand the forgiveness of another. As much as we would like victims of abuse to experience healing it is outside our control. People heal in their own time and in their own way. Pope Francis comments very realistically on this:

Of those who have endured much unjust and cruel suffering, a sort of "social forgiveness" must not be demanded. Reconciliation is a personal act, and no one can impose it upon an entire society, however great the need to foster it... it is not possible to proclaim a "blanket reconciliation" in an effort to bind wounds by decree or to cover injustices in a cloak of oblivion. Who can claim the right to forgive in the name of others? It is moving to see forgiveness shown by those who are able to leave behind the harm they suffered, but it is also humanly understandable in the case of those who cannot. In any case, forgetting is never the answer. (Pope Francis, 2020, # 246)

We must work for reconciliation; we must foster communities of acceptance and healing. However, our efforts may not produce the positive

results we desire – at least not in our preferred time-frame. We can only work to restore the servant leadership of Jesus, and use power for others, not over them.

What have you learned from speaking to a survivor of abuse?

What feelings were evoked from this encounter?

The Primacy of Humility

If we are to be Leaders for Healing, we need to possess that disposition which seems to be in short supply in our noisy, fast-paced, image-driven contemporary world: humility. The Latin root of the word suggests strength and fertility, for it is derived from *humus*, as in earth.

To be humble is to accept that we don't have all the answers and we aren't always right in our thinking, actions and decisions. We know there's scope for failure and there's scope for learning. In the Book of Joy the Dalai Lama says:

...when the spring bloom comes, where does it start? Does it start in the hilltops or down in the Valleys first? Growth begins first in the low places. So similarly if you remain humble, then there is the possibility to keep learning. So I often tell them that although I'm eighty years old I still consider myself a student. (Dalai Lama, 2016)

Humility has a privileged place in our Christian tradition. No one was more humble than Jesus, who accepted death on a cross next to two criminals. The early monks were instructed to embrace humility as a way of overcoming our natural human tendency to self-centred behaviour. It was taught as a powerful means of becoming aligned with creation. St Augustine of Hippo wrote:

Do you wish to be great? Then begin by being. Do you desire a great and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundations. (Augustine. & Healey (trans), J., 1934)

Humour is a helpful ally to humility. Pope Francis has warned about the danger of wandering around like a “*sourpuss*”. Even the title of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, is a reminder that as people of the Resurrection we need to be joyful. We should, more often than not, exude the warmth of salvation. Workplaces, families and communities all benefit from a sense of fun and good humour.

St Marcellin knew the value of humility. It is one of the three virtues that he wanted to characterise his Brothers: modesty, simplicity and humility. He himself was a living witness to humility. He didn't set himself apart from the men who came to share his mission. Even though as a Priest he could have demanded to be treated differently, he wanted to be with his brothers. He travelled with them, worked with them, shared meals with them. This was the way he exercised his influence. It was the way he trained and formed them.

Water from the Rock, announces the constituent place of humility in the Marist spirituality of simplicity:

In humility, we seek to know ourselves in our strengths and weaknesses and readily accept the help we may need. We grow to be at peace with the person God has created. Approaching others with openness and gratitude, we accept them as they are, and readily listen to how they experience us. We willingly offer forgiveness and take the first step toward reconciliation. (Marist Brothers, 2007, n. 36-37)

Leadership grounded in humility is open and welcoming. It commits to working for what is in the best interests of others. It prioritises the needs of the ones we lead.

Nominate one person from your life experience that you would regard as genuinely humble. What qualities supported her or his humility?

Now is the Time

There is too much to be written on the issue of healing and a leader's role in facilitating it. In this turbulent world it is an existential necessity that those who have some role of Leadership are capable of responding to the real needs, the interior cries of those they lead. If you take a broad perspective of leadership, to include that offered by parents or teachers, I'm sure it happens daily. Even if we adopt a narrower interpretation to apply to those who manage and lead Companies, Offices or Church Ministries such leadership is apparent. It isn't easy, but it is imperative. It will certainly happen if we make a firm commitment to it and renew that commitment regularly. It will if we seek to engage more than superficially with others, to be attentive to their situations, to acknowledge their hurts and uncertainties. Now is the time to commit to such Leadership, and if we do...

*That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.
It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is your reaction to Seamus Heaney's poem, the Cure of Troy? What words or phrases speak most clearly to you?
2. Who have been your Angels of Healing; those who have touched and helped heal you?

3. Words can harm or heal. What words does your community most need to hear for healing?
4. As brothers how can we help to facilitate each other's journey to wholeness?
5. Christian Leaders have a special role to play in advancing healing and wholeness. Can you identify some Leaders who are good examples of this? What have they done to facilitate healing?
6. As a Leader, how can you facilitate healing in your community / work place? What specific skills do you most require?
7. The COVID-19 Pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities and fragilities. Which ones are most apparent to you? What can you do in response?
8. Young people continue to suffer in different ways around our world, from physical and sexual abuse to depression and mental illness. What is a concrete step you are taking to help address one area of harm?
9. Can you identify how and when Champagnat was an agent of healing?
10. How will Jesus help you be a Leader and Healer?

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CHAPTER 6



Awareness

Br. Ken McDonald
General Councilor

To want to see clearly is a true act of fearlessness. To open our hearts and minds, to be open to what life is offering us in this moment, requires tremendous courage and steadfastness. (Wheatley, 2010, p. 121)

Awareness is one of the characteristics of servant leadership. As Robert K. Greenleaf observed in his book, *Servant-Leadership: A Journey in the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, “awareness is not a giver of solace – it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually shapely awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity” (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 6). Leadership at whatever level, whether it be of the local community, of a ministry or at a provincial level, can be a risky business. It requires awareness of the complexity of the situation in which leadership is practised. Developing this awareness can lead to personal challenges and surprising outcomes.

Often those in leadership are faced with complex situations. In dealing with these situations the temptation is to continue to rely on pre-existing assumptions, outdated perspectives and habitual ways of acting. This can result in leaders who are ignorant of what is going on around them. Servant leaders, on the other hand, approach their leadership with a stance of inquiry. They are attentive to the organisation they are leading. They desire to understand the context in which they practice their role of leadership. They are curious, willing to listen to others and learn. They are non-judgemental and open to new solutions and patience.

In the book *Let Us Dream: A Path to a Better Future*, Pope Francis asks the question: “Which is the result of constantly looking away, telling ourselves that because there is no immediate or magic solution, it is better not to feel anything?” (Ivereigh, 2020, p.18). Constantly looking away is contradictory to becoming aware. Awareness of the implicit workings of an organisation, the unspoken rules, the unchallenged behaviours and the unrecognised power relationships takes time. These exist in every setting.

They are not necessarily bad, but they are a reality. Becoming attentive to the workings of the ministry or the community and allowing awareness to emerge, asking open questions appropriate to the context, listening to other perspectives and reflecting on what is learnt is a gradual process. Most importantly it takes time to cultivate the ability to forgo judgement and pre-existing assumptions and to be surprised by what is discovered. Even after years of experience as a leader there is still a need to be open to the new possibilities and the opportunity for creative insight.

The best way to describe this awareness and the impact it has on a leader is through personal experience. With over twenty years of experience in Papua New Guinea, I was appointed the District leader of Melanesia in 2005. I was not new to leadership having been both a ministry leader and community leader. It was a privilege to have a strong Council with some enthusiastic, motivated younger Melanesian Brothers. As most Councillors were new to the role we asked a facilitator to help with the formation of the Council and develop our way of working together. This seemed to work well. District Council meetings were conducted in what I believed to be the most effective and efficient manner. There was a published agenda which the Council worked through in an almost clinical way, staying on task and getting the work done. I soon realised that even though I had done all the right things the District Council was not working as I had dreamed. Council meetings lacked engagement and creativity and were very mechanical. Things needed to change. I struggled to understand how to improve the work of the Council to get the best out of them and thus be effective in the leadership of the District. With reflection I realised I had failed to draw on my own experience and understanding of Melanesian culture.

During my time in Papua New Guinea, I had been determined to become as aware of Melanesian culture as an outsider can. I had done a cultural orientation programme, read appropriate material explaining the culture, asked questions and listened to Melanesians. I had built up a basic understanding of Melanesian culture, its communitarian nature, its

communication style, and its concept of time. All these were different to my home Australian anglophone culture. Even with the work I had done to become acquainted with the Melanesian culture, I did not use the awareness of the Melanesian culture I had developed. Obviously, I was conducting council meeting more suited to the Australian anglophone culture and less suited to the Melanesian way of meetings.

To improve District Council meetings things needed to change. I was aware of the problem but was still searching for a solution. In dialogue with some members of the council I realised that I had reverted to conducting District Council meetings in a culturally inappropriate way. If I wanted to change the outcome of the meetings, I needed to develop a more culturally appropriate way of running them. The changes that were needed were very simple. Melanesian is an oral culture. They would prefer to tell stories rather than read and respond to documents. We initiated a time to tell stories at the beginning of each Council meeting. I would ask each member of the council what had happened since the last Council meeting and from this “story telling” I would add to the meeting agenda. I learned that in listening to the stories important agenda items would emerge. Also, I learned to work with a different concept of time. I needed to ensure that enough time was given for the members of the Council to respond to the issues and be prepared to come back to an issue even if I thought a decision had been made. This changed the style of meetings. It extended the time of each meeting, made the agenda more flexible, allowed for periods of silence during discussions and gave opportunities to revisit topics even where a decision had been finalised. The atmosphere in the Council changed and became more productive.

Spending time becoming aware of the complexity of two profoundly different cultures working together for the benefit of the whole, understanding the differences in the cultures, being preparing to dialogue with the Melanesian members of the District Council and not manipulating the outcome all helped to improve the discussions within the council and the decision-making processes. Awareness of the complexity

of the situation and giving my ideas time to mature, challenged my pre-existing assumptions about effective council meetings and led to a surprising outcome. There was an important learning for me. I needed to be aware of the complexity of leading in another culture. The more I was attentive to the realities of Melanesian culture and prepared to learn from this awareness the more I was open to finding emerging solutions.

Awareness of Self

“If you want to exercise leadership that brings about change you [we] must be willing to change yourself [ourselves]” (Kahane, 2010, p. 22). By being attentive to emotions, behaviours and reactions, Marist servant leaders become more self-aware and this helps us mature in our role.

Self-awareness is the ability to look at ourselves, think deeply about our emotions, values, behaviours and prejudices and consider how they impact on us in our role as leaders and on those we lead. We become more self-aware by acknowledging the strengths and the capacities we bring to leadership and by developing an understanding of our own buried assumptions, habitual behaviours and unintentional prejudices. Part of this growth in self-awareness is understanding our reactions in various situations. One of the more significant is being aware of how we handle conflict and tension that arise in exercising leadership. There is a tendency under such pressure to revert to underlying assumptions and habitual behaviours and lose sight of the impact these may have on our ability to be effective leaders.

It is not always possible for leaders to be completely objective. Therefore, leaders need to understand the crucial role that their own perspectives and perceptions play in developing awareness. Lived experience impacts on perspectives and perceptions and vice versa – perspectives and perceptions impact on lived experience. Two people can be aware of the same situation in two completely different ways.

As leaders it is vital to undertake a process to develop our self-awareness. Becoming self-aware is not a static process. Self-awareness evolves over time and with experience and is never finalised. In leadership the most important learnings will come specifically while functioning as a leader. *“How am I reacting as a leader and what is at play within me?”* is a crucial question for all leaders. Partly this is an awareness of our skill level and capacity to carry out the tasks of leadership and how best to compensate for those areas that are lacking. It is also the ability to be self-reflective and have insights into those more personal aspects of ourselves that also impact on your leadership. It is vital to reflect on what we do in leadership, why we do it and with what effect.

This is not only a personal reflection but requires professional relationships with others. Finding people who are wise, who can help us navigate the territory of leadership and talk through our experience is beneficial. Having a willingness to learn and listen to others by asking for people’s feedback can also be helpful (Kahane, 2010). More than a desire for knowledge it is a desire to understand ourselves and the impact our personal style, assumptions, perspectives and behaviours have on our leadership.

None of this is easy. Taking the time to reflect on how we exercise leadership, being open to hearing the perspectives of others, suspending established ways of understanding a situation and identifying our own capabilities are all challenging. However, developing an understanding of our unquestioned assumptions, prejudices and deeply habitual ways of acting allows us to view the ministry anew, opens us to respond in fresh ways and allows us to be more creative in our leadership.

Awareness of God’s Presence in the World

The Institute has long encouraged us to be aware of God’s Spirit at work in the world. Being attentive to God’s presence is basic to our way of life as Marists. This awareness of God is reflected in the words of Pope

Francis who said, “we trust that the Lord will open for us doors we had no idea were there” (Ivereigh, 2020, p. 21). This confidence underpins our life as Marists and is central to our leadership. At the 22nd General Chapter in 2017 we began with two questions. *What is God calling us to be and What is God calling us to do?* Both these questions encourage us to be attentive to God’s presence in the world and in all that we do.

Over time Father Champagnat developed a profound awareness of the presence of God. In his circular *A revolution of the heart*, Sean Sammon (2003) stated that the practice of the presence of God became the heart of Marcellin’s spiritual life. “Marcellin was confident that Jesus was close at hand, always present in his interactions and the events of his life.” (p. 49) “*Marcellin described the spirituality he recommended for his Little Brothers in his last testament; it was a mirror of his own. Practice the presence of God; it is the soul of prayer, meditation, and all the virtues.*” (p. 24)

Marcellin’s original intuitions have been built on by succeeding Superior Generals encouraging us to engage in an interior journey first recommended by Marcellin. Giving time to a relationship with God through a practice of contemplation develops an awareness of God’s activity in the world. The practice of the presence of God, being attentive to God’s action in the world and being aware of the action of the Holy Spirit are important for all those who exercise Marist servant leadership.

The writings for Emili Turú, Superior General from 2009 to 2017 are a cogent example of this encouragement. In his circular, *La Valla the lighthouse*, Emili Turú (2017) describes:

the God who is within and not outside, who is present in every reality and everything that is, who embraces us inside and out, we name as Holy Spirit. So, there is nothing outside of God; nothing happens outside God. We are never far off or outside but rather always before, in and with God. (p. 303)

Emili develops this further by stating:

If God is not outside but within us, embracing and lovingly penetrating all of reality, prayer changes a lot. It is no longer a question of speaking to someone outside, distant, but of opening myself, being attentive and listening. Or, simply, to stay with this Presence living in me. (p. 303)

Emili also wrote about the importance of developing a contemplative stance, so as to cultivate our attention to God. In his writings he encouraged us to introduce silence into our daily lives.

“Without silence, it is very easy to waste our lives on trivialities, to be pushed and pulled by life’s circumstances, to take decisions precipitately. Without silence, how do we give of ourselves in authentic encounters with others or with the living God?” (p. 300)

Silence and contemplative practice provide the setting for us to become aware of the activity of God in the world. Surely Emili here is encouraging us to give time and opening ourselves to being aware of the presence of God and God’s activity in the world.

Engaging in silence and having a contemplative stance in our leadership makes us alert to what is happening in ourselves and what is happening in our world. It opens us to a deep-rooted awareness and helps us to understand better our unquestioned assumptions, prejudices and deeply habitual ways of acting that impact on us in our role as leader. It enables us to live in the present moment intensely, opens us to the new that is being offered and surprises us with the creativity that emerges.

Awareness of our Connectedness

Today we live in an interconnected world and are part of various systems. For those leading ministries, our primary responsibility is to work

within the reality of the ministry. However, leaders are often part of a network of province ministries and some are answerable to a government department or a Diocese. For those in other forms of leadership, each has a web of intersecting systems that impact in some way on his / her leadership. It is crucial for leaders to become aware of the systems they are working in and the other interconnecting systems that impact on their leadership.

Marist servant leaders care deeply about the wellbeing and personal and professional growth of those they lead. An awareness of those we minister to is paramount whether it is the students and staff of a school, the Brothers who live in our community or those who work in the Provincial office. This is central to our mission. Learning to be more attentive and genuinely curious about those we lead is vital. At a meeting in Rome when Br Emili was Superior General, he gave each of the participants a transparent image of the eyes of a child. In presenting this he called us to see the world through the eyes of a child. Being prepared to see the world through the eyes of others requires that we develop a true awareness of their world. This deeper understanding helps to develop innovative responses to the needs of those to whom we minister

With our movement towards being a global family, it is opportune to say a little about awareness of the culture of those with whom we work. Marcellin dreamed of being of service in all the diocese of the world. As he wrote to Monsignor Philibert de Brouillard on 15 February 1837, "*all the Dioceses of the world enter into our plans*" (Sester, 1991, n. 93). From our origins, there has always been the possibility of working with other cultures. In today's global village this takes on new meaning. There are an expanding number of cultures coming into contact with each other and opportunities for people of different cultures to interact. This diversity of cultures and these cross-cultural relationships are reflected in many of our ministries. Thus, awareness of the cultures of those in our ministries is paramount. For those drawn to work immersed in another culture, developing awareness of that culture is crucial for everyone but particularly for those in a leadership role.

All of us have a tendency to exclude others just because they are different (Law, 2000). Personally, it is helpful to reflect on how we react to those who look or behave differently from us. For some, this requires us to be aware of our fears of those who are different. This is the same in our ministries and communities. All organisations set up boundaries that exclude those who are seen as different. We need to become aware of these boundaries and understand how powerful they are and how difficult they are to breach (Law, 2000). Even when we include those who are different, we are not always prepared to accept them as true equals. They are welcomed but never really accepted as full members of the community.

Being aware of the differences and learning to accept and appreciate them is at the heart of Marist servant leadership. We learn much more about culture through careful observation and reflective participation than through reading about it (Senge, 2004). This takes time and relies on the qualities of openness and curiosity and requires us to learn new ways of behaviour. Our institutions also need to be aware of how they handle difference and find new imaginative ways to include those who are different.

A true leader is not oblivious to what others in the ministry, community, or the Province think. Of most importance is a deeper understanding of the local reality in which leadership is being practised. This awareness involves consideration of the impact of leadership decisions on others and on the institution. This is not a solitary project reserved for the leader. It is the role of the servant leader to listen to others, be open to fresh perspectives and prepared to listen to voices that are not normally heard. Marcellin Champagnat's desire to develop a deeper awareness of the reality of his Brothers' lives resulted in his move to live with the Brothers in La Vallà.

Marist leaders are aware of the larger interconnected systems they engage with. Our ministries, communities, and administrative units do not work in isolation. Provinces, Government Departments, Dioceses

have expectations and regulations which have an impact, and it is the responsibility of leadership to be aware of these. Relationships with these various entities need to be developed. This takes an awareness of what is required. These relationships also call us to be in dialogue, to listen to other perspectives, and to be open to others' opinions.

A Note on Prophetic Leadership and Awareness

In his book *The Liberating Path of the Hebrew Prophets Then and Now*, Nahum Ward-Lev describes three qualities that are inherent in every prophet: “an encounter with divine love and concern for the world, courage to name oppression, and the moral imagination to articulate an alternative future that is hopeful” (Ward-Lev, 2019, p. 11). This is a simple model easily adapted to the prophetic nature of Marist Leadership. Firstly, the encounter with divine love and concern for the world presupposes an awareness of God’s spirit alive and active in the world. Encountering the presence of God was central to Marcellin’s personal spirituality and was his desire for the early Brothers of the Institute. He taught his brothers to practice the presence of God. He used the simple images of the crib, the cross and the altar to remind the brothers of the places where we find Christ in the world. He used the sound of a ringing bell, a regular occurrence in the valleys around La Valla. When a bell was rung, the brother should stop and recall that he is in God’s presence.

Courage to name oppression – those factors that militate against the flourishing of people – is an essential quality of Marist Leadership. All institutions have elements that need to be confronted and transformed. Awareness of these components of oppression are important for Marist Leaders. Having the courage to name them and the resolve to bring about change are part of Marist leadership. This entails the hopeful articulation of an alternative future, a future when all those being served by the ministry or institution can flourish.

What does this mean for those in leadership?

The opposite of awareness is indifference. One of the dangers of this indifference is that it can become normal, silently seeping into our lifestyles and value judgements. We cannot get used to indifference (Ivereigh, 2020). The best way to fight indifference is to work on specific ways to develop our awareness. Self-awareness is important for all people and for leaders it helps hone our craft. Reflecting on our experiences, speaking with other knowledgeable leaders, and listening to the wisdom of others in the ministry help us to grow in our understanding of our practice of leadership. Giving ourselves quiet time to read and reflect, finding a good mentor who we can dialogue with about our leadership practice and having regular conversations with those in our ministry give us the tools to develop the self-awareness we need to become better servant leaders.

As leaders of Christian communities, we acknowledge that Christ is at the centre of all that we do. The practice of the presence of God, encouraged by Marcellin, is crucial in Marist leadership. Being open and aware of God's activity in our own lives and the lives of the people we work with and for takes time and patience. This means giving ourselves the space for contemplation, open to being surprised by God, and prepared to let go of some preconceived assumptions and perceptions.

Central to our mission as Marists are children and young people and those with whom we work. It is our awareness of their lived experience, their culture, and their hopes and dreams that are critical. At the 22nd General Chapter in Rionegro, the young people called on the Brothers to leave their offices and be in contact with the young, to be present with them and listen to them. This is at the heart of what it means to develop awareness. It is through engaging with people, being curious, listening to them, and reflecting on what you hear that you become aware of their hopes and dreams. This all takes time, patience, and a sense of humour. As leaders, we need to “waste time” with those we lead, the children and

young people, the staff, and the Brothers. We need to spend time with them, listen to them, and be prepared to be changed by them.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Reflecting on your own experience how have you become aware of the complexity of the situation in which you practice leadership?
2. How have your pre-existing assumptions and perceptions been challenged by your experience of leadership? How have these challenges impacted on your style of leadership?
3. Reflecting on your experience of leadership what have you learned about yourself and the way you react to complex situations and challenges?
4. How are you attentive to the presence of God in your work as a leader?
5. In your time as a leader, how have you used your understanding of the context in which you lead to articulate a future that is hopeful?

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CHAPTER 7



Persuading with Action and Service

Br. Vincent de Paul Kouassi
Province of West Africa
Rector of MIUC

Introduction

Our different cultures do not consider the servant as someone whose role is to lead, but a person who serves and executes what the leader commands. However, these two roles, servant and leader, according to Greenleaf (2008), can “be fused in one real person, in all levels of status or calling” (p. 2). For Christians, Greenleaf’s coined word ‘servant-leadership’ makes perfect sense because Christ, our leader, spent his entire earthly life showing to us how he “did not come to be served but to serve” (Mt 20: 28; Mk 10:45).

Persuading his disciples to accept that a leader should serve had not been easy, though. During the most poignant example of servant-leadership that the Lord gave, Peter refused that Christ washed his feet: “Lord you are not going to wash my feet” (Jn 13:6) is what he said to Christ. In other words, in most people’s eyes, masters or leaders do not serve but are attended to or served. Christ knew how difficult it would be, and still is, for people to understand that shift in the understanding and practice of leadership immediately. There is an apparent contradiction in the expression “servant-leadership” in our today’s socio-political context. The question that people would ask is the following: How could a leader who is commonly and, I would say, unfortunately, perceived as the boss whom people should serve become the servant?

The Lord is aware of that misconception and slow understanding, but he remains patient. He tells Peter and each one of us today: “You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand” (Jn 13:7). The Lord’s attempt to persuade Peter is one of the most crucial characteristics of servant-leadership: Persuasion. The last part of this practical reflection will draw again from the washing of the feet to show what persuasion, from a Christian and Marist perspective, should imply for servant-leaders.

In the list of characteristics of servant-leadership elaborated by Greenleaf (2008), persuasion seems to be out of place; Collins (2015) even qualified it as “odd inclusion”. However, that very ‘abnormality’ is what brings out the religious aspect of servant-leadership. Many authors, particularly Spears (2002) and Gordon and Xue Xing (2020), became convinced that Greenleaf’s proximity to the Quakers, a religious group, explained why he promoted persuasion over coercion. As Marist of Champagnat, leaders, evangelizers and followers of Christ, this reflection should help us explore, understand, and practice, persuasion as a crucial quality of servant-leadership.

A few questions will guide our reflection:

- What is persuasion?
- How does a true servant-leader persuade their followers?
- How does the example set by Christ become, for us, the barometer for an authentic and successful persuasion and, ultimately, for a true prophetic leadership?

What is Persuasion?

Persuasion is simply an attempt to lead others to accept a change. Persuasion is part of a leader’s job, as they are continually trying to convince their followers to embrace a change that they want to implement. Northouse’s (2016) definition is an excellent summary of what we should understand by persuasion. He defined it as the “clear and persistent communication that convinces others to change” (p. 225). He even explained further by opposing it to coercion. This contrast elucidates the understanding of persuasion as a trait or quality of the servant leader. While coercion “utilises positional authority to force compliance, persuasion creates change through the use of gentle non-judgmental argument” (p. 225). In the line of servant-leadership, a counterexample to persuasion would be a leader who threatens to fire their workers if they do not accept a change that the organisation wants to implement.

Change is indeed part of life, but it is also true that resistance to change, as Michelman (2007) stressed, is a big part of peoples' lives and organisations. Interestingly, even when their lives are at stake, some people, especially resisters, cannot be persuaded to change. In his book *Change or Die*, Deutschman (2007) explained that sometimes, even when people know the change they need to embrace in order to stay alive, they continue to resist and refuse to be persuaded by anyone or any leader. In the face of such rigidity, how do authentic servant leaders persuade their followers?

The Gentle Persuasion of the Servant Leader

In the Nicomachean Ethics (I.13), Aristotle defined the human being as a rational animal. This means that we can and should all understand the reason behind any change or anything to be implemented if we must accept it. If we must be persuaded and convinced by a leader, that leader should expose the logic behind their ideas. The reasoning part is essential; however, Aristotle did not limit persuasion to the *logos* alone. To the logical argument or *logos*, the philosopher added *pathos* and *ethos*. *Pathos* refers to the appeal to emotions and *ethos* to the persuader or leader's personality or character. The most important of the three, according to Aristotle, is and should always be the *ethos*. For him, the personality of the leader is either detrimental or favourable to persuasion.

In a nutshell, leaders should always explain any change process to people because they are rational beings. The people should also feel that their leader is proposing something for their good or the common good. After these two conditions, the personality of the leader will determine the success or failure of the persuasion. If the leader is rude or discourteous in addressing the people, the persuasion will fail. With rudeness, the people might act and obey, but only because they feel coerced or forced to do so. This is where, within that attempt to persuade gently or rudely, the difference between an ordinary leader and a servant leader lies. However, according to Collins (2015), some other leaders, on the contrary, use

coercion to persuade. Coercion violates freedom and humiliates people because as the leaders use their positional authority to force compliance, they leave no room for genuine and honest communication.

This twisted and distorted way of apprehending leadership has, unfortunately, reached our Marist and religious sphere. Whether it be out of lack of proper training, lacking personality, or any other shortcoming, we cannot look down on our collaborators in some of our ministries, apostolates, workplaces, communities, and families. We need to find a more Christlike way to persuade or deal with those who resist the change we want to initiate. Marist leaders, in schools, social works, communities or families, should not fall into the trap of so many leaders today who “confuse persuasion with manipulation and coercion” (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2018, p. 22). Marist leaders need to be servant leaders who persuade gently by creating that “feeling of rightness” among the people themselves. Greenleaf (1996) himself was absolutely clear on the freedom of the person to persuade when he wrote that “the person persuaded must take that intuitive step alone, untrammelled by coercive or manipulative stratagems of any kind” (p. 129). Even when the person being persuaded is extremely resistant to any change, nothing can justify using any unethically twisted persuasion technique. Marist leaders should stay away from “the end justifies the means” pseudo and unethical principle, which Machiavelli (1513/1995) advised every leader to use. Like Christ, Marist leaders should remain gentle and altruistic in their way of persuading, even in times of resistance.

Persuasion in Times of Resistance

Marist leader should use different ways, more Christian ways, to persuade in times of resistance to change. Resistance to change has always been part of human society (Michelman, 2007), particularly when there are no given reasons for the change in question. I worked some few years as a bursar in one of our schools where most teachers and workers had no

bank account and did not intend to. One would think that it was really strange in this 21st century, but they wanted to receive their salaries in cash. Without understanding their reasons for not having bank accounts, the school administration decided to change and pay all the salaries directly in bank accounts. They were only informed and ordered to open an account with an establishment which the school suggested. The reasons were very genuine and even profitable to the teachers, the workers, and the whole school. Unfortunately, the school leaders did not explain those reasons to the teachers and workers. Therefore, they made it clear to me that they preferred to receive their wages at the school. Eventually, we all reached an agreement later, and I learned the biggest lesson of my life from that experience.

One important aspect that helped overcome the resistance was the open communication that we had. I listened to their reasons and apologized, on behalf of the whole administration, for not consulting them before making that decision, which we thought would be appreciated by them. Then I gave them the rationale behind that decision, which, I believe, was crucial in persuading them to accept that change. When the school decided to pay attention to the human aspect and considered their feelings and reasons, they immediately became more flexible towards that new way of operating. I gave them time to express their reasons for resisting the change the leaders wanted to initiate. I came to understand that the process of persuasion should rely on honest communication and consideration of the human aspects; they are key elements in implementing any change and new ideas (Bolman, 2013). In this case, because the dialogue was respectful and truthful, almost all of them softened their position and resisted less.

That experience was not an entirely successful one because a few workers continued to refuse the payment at the Bank, despite all the explanation that we gave. Even when we placed that particular decision within the larger vision of the school's attempt to be consistent in our way of operating, they continued to resist. That little failure was, all the same, a huge learning experience for me. I learned that we created some deep

mistrust between us because the administration so poorly communicated with them. Consequently, they began to resist and refute the whole initiative. In addition to the loss of trust, they also believed that the Bank would make them lose money; therefore, that economic disincentive totally justified their resistance, according to them.

From this and many other experiences, it appears that any process of change should associate everyone, particularly those most affected by it. Right from the start, the leaders should communicate as much as possible to everyone so that they feel included in the whole process. In the example above, to restore the broken communication, I invited the director of the Bank who came and talked with the workers, answering their question and preoccupations. He was able to convince everyone to accept the principle and open an account.

We should retain here that the frame of mind of the leader is crucial in persuading others to overcome resistance and embrace change. According to Ford (2008), one disposition is that Leaders should not hold the belief that resistance is only the fault of the person receiving the change. In other words, servant leaders have to be optimistic and trust that, despite the resistance, anybody is capable of embracing change if the change is adequately explained. Champagnat had that trust in people; he was persuaded that everyone has good in them, with the ability to change and become a better Christian or citizen. Our founder wanted leaders, especially school leaders, to hold the same hope and faith in their students. In his letter to brother Barthélemy Badard on the 21st of January 1830, he said: “Tell your children that Jesus and Mary love them all very much: those who are good because they resemble Jesus Christ, who is infinitely good; those who are not yet good, because they will become so” (Circulaire I, p. 153). Champagnat advises leaders to treat everyone with dignity and respect because each individual, as a creature of God, is capable of change and conversion. Leaders, as Gandz (2008, p. 1) would put it, must be “smart” enough and “cherish the resisters” because that is the only way to persuade them. As a matter of fact, this is how, as Christians and Marist leaders, we should

understand Christ's challenging invitation to "Love your enemies" (Mt 5:44). It requires lots of patience and trust because persuasion and change do not happen overnight.

When leaders try to persuade others by threats and manipulations, they only succeed in making people comply and less productive. People become resentful and hateful towards these kinds of leaders. What is worse is that when those under the command of such leaders become leaders, they also duplicate that horrible behaviour. They begin to use threats and intimidations to compel others to do what they want. Rather than manipulations and threats, Christ used his actions, his example, to persuade his disciples. As Christians and as Marist servant-leaders, how does Christ's example enlighten and guide our practice of persuasion? In other words, how does a true Marist servant leader persuade their collaborators?

Persuading with action and service

Most people put service at the heart of leadership; unfortunately, few translate it into concrete action. Most newly appointed leaders often use expressions like 'happy to serve', 'humble servant' or 'your servant' without fully grasping the meaning of this service. Many leaders use the word service and never inquire with the people they want to serve what they really need. Without sounding too political or partially engaged, my question to some politicians has always been this: What and how do you serve people when you have not even asked them what it is that they need? Northouse (2016) stressed that, in the practice of authentic leadership, leaders easily persuade the people when, as leaders, they understand their "ethical responsibility to treat followers with dignity and respect—as human beings with unique identities" (p. 336). This ethical commitment moves the leader to be mindful of what the people's needs are. Northouse even added that it is only in considering the needs of the people that leaders can significantly influence and persuade any group to undertake any change they are proposing.

More quickly, people will listen to a leader who minds their needs than one who does not know and care about what they want. This explains why, right from his introduction, Northouse (2016) saw the ethical responsibility as a call to “attend to the needs and concern of followers” (p.7). However, taking care of people’s need is not only in words or empty principles but also in action and truth, as Christ showed us throughout his life. The Lord sets the example of service, care for our needs, and love to his followers. That love, translated into action, is the ultimate example that persuades his followers to trust and follow what he offered. The Washing of the feet (Jn 13: 1-17) means that the leader can teach others to serve only by serving others in humility and love. The servant-leader can persuade others to serve only by serving them and, thus, teaching them how to serve. Christ persuaded his followers by his action. His loving service as a leader is described in the last moments with his disciples, as narrated by John: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). It is the action of the leader that persuades, not empty words. In this sense, servant leadership is like love at the service of others. The actions of the leader transform and lead others to becoming servants like their leader. Jesus explains it all to his disciples and to us: “you call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (Jn 13 15).

This explanation and the love manifested through service were the tools for persuasion that Christ used. The Lord did not force, intimidate or threaten his followers to become servants like him. He showed them by doing it himself because he knew that, as Northouse (2016) will put it, in influencing people towards achieving common goals, “Leaders who use coercion are interested in their own goals and seldom are interested in the wants and needs of followers and using coercion runs counter to working with followers to achieve a common goal” (p.13). The followers will fully support an initiative from their

leader if that initiative expresses the care which the leader has for them. A caring leader, like Christ, would easily persuade his people. I totally concur with Northouse (1996), who praised servant leadership as “the only leadership approach that frames the leadership process around the principle of caring for others” (p. 240).

Conclusion

This essay focused on persuasion as a crucial characteristic of servant leadership. Authentic leadership, or servant leadership, consists essentially of caring for others as the heart of persuasion. The logos, the pathos, and the ethos should have, as their linking thread, the leader’s unconditional and selfless love. The example of our Lord, who loved us till the end by dying for us, shows that any attempt to persuade or convince others is always possible when love surrounds it. Love drives people to follow what their leaders say. The disciples obeyed Christ because they loved him. The brothers loved Champagnat and did what he asked of them. Like Christ, Champagnat, or any authentic leader, servant leaders know that there are good seeds within every creature of God. They water them and patiently wait for them to grow and bear fruits of love and service.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

This example of Christ leaves us with some questions that could guide our way of using persuasion as Marist leaders, in our communities, our families, our schools, and other places of work.

1. What should our Marist style of persuasion in the practice of leadership be? Coercion or gentle persuasion?
2. How important is that Marist way of persuading in our leadership?
3. How do Marist leaders put into practice that style of persuasion?

4. Are there any examples of that Marist persuasion style at the local, provincial or congregational level?
5. What are the challenges and benefits of that Marist persuasion style in a multicultural and international or global family like ours?

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CHAPTER 8



A Listening Leadership

Br. Norbert Mwila
Provincial of Southern Africa

A true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening first. When one is a leader, this disposition causes one to be seen as servant first. (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 17)

The 22nd General Chapter (2017) asks us to assume a prophetic and servant leadership which closely accompanies Marist life and mission. Being a servant leader involves being a light that guides others so that decisions are made jointly, and are Christ centred and motivated. “Christ, who received all authority from the Father, became a servant, washing the feet of his disciples, thus leaving them a new model of authority as service” (C. 87).

The undermentioned biblical figures provide outstanding examples of servant leadership. They illustrate what kind of persons we are called to be and what we are called to do.

John the Baptist

The life and mission of John the Baptist provide an essential lesson to any listening-servant, and prophetic leader. “A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.” (Jn 1: 6-7) He was a messenger and prophet sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight. It was God’s plan to reveal himself through the incarnate son to whom John bore witness.

The key inspirational message of John was that the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world (cf. Jn 1: 6-7). John was attentive to Jesus’ message and mission. He gave priority to Jesus’ instructions rather than his own opinion. When Jesus went to John to be baptised, John himself wondered whether it was right that he would be the one to baptise Jesus. In John’s perception, Jesus was the greater person.

John was quite straightforward about his identity in relation to Jesus. The Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask John who he was. In particular, because he was baptising, they suspected he might be the Messiah. In all humility and straightforwardness, he answered: “I baptise with water, but there’s one among you whom you do not recognise, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie” (Jn 1: 26–27).

John also referred to Jesus as the one who should increase while John himself should decrease. Leadership is not always about authority. Servant leaders focus on people and go out of their way to support their people. They have a sound judgement and a sense of priority.

After Jesus’ quiet insistence that John be the one to baptise Jesus, John accepted the request without demur. The will of Jesus in every disciple’s life needs to take precedence over anyone else’s wish and desire.

On another occasion, John noticed Jesus passing by and he pointed out to his own disciples that they should follow Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God” (cf Jn 1:35). His vision and focus are on the essential. John here shows honesty and integrity. By pointing out the Lamb, he risked losing disciples. Servant leaders have a sense of duty towards the people entrusted to their care. Decisions they make are for the common good and not for their own selfish interest.

It was John’s integrity in fearlessly speaking out the truth to King Herod that caused him to be imprisoned and eventually to be killed. John said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (Mk 6: 18).

Servant leaders ought to listen and to speak out the truth that needs to be said even when it hurts, pains and costs one’s own life. ***Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter***, said Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968).

John the Baptist, knowing the truth perfectly well, was able to challenge the status quo: it had to be done. He led by example: people were able to emulate the values he stood for, integrity, respect and commitment. John taught his disciples not only by word of mouth, but by his outspoken courage even though it cost him his life.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

She was a young woman who listened to the message of the angel and said yes in humility, in faith, and with courageous generosity. “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1: 38). Mary is an inspirational woman: she listens and seeks to understand, and then accepts in utmost freedom the will of God to be done in her life. Her responsiveness and availability to carry out the mission entrusted to her, have an influence on our attitudes and values with regard to Marist life and mission.

We serve others when we encourage the practice of mindfulness and listening to others as Mary did. “Our lives as servant-leaders begin when we tune in one another and share communication in a space of reciprocity” (Zisa, 2013).

Servant-leaders remind us of the importance of listening and the practice of mindfulness to whatever message is being communicated to them. In Mary, it’s clearly noticed that she often kept things and pondered them in her heart. It’s a vital attitude in which listening allows one to look within the inner self and become more conscious of the right way to follow and avoid barriers that inhibit the ability to listen effectively.

At the wedding at Cana when Mary instructed the stewards to do whatever Jesus would tell them, she acted as a sensitive and compassionate Mother to the needs of others. Her intervention and leadership was dependent up her ability to listen and perceive the needs of others outside herself. With her positive sensitivity, she leads by example.

“When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying ... all these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers” (Acts, 1:13ss). Servant-leaders prioritise moments of daily prayer either as individual or in community. Under the influence of the Spirit and in the presence of Mary who is the first Superior of the Institute, we are able to do much good and provide support and encouragement in our ministry in the Church. We assume the position of the lighthouse: a beacon of hope in society in our troubled times and moments of uncertainty.

Marcellin

Like Mary in the early Church, Marcellin accompanied the first brothers with attentiveness, sensitivity, and equanimity. Brothers among their brothers, those called to exercise the service of authority seek, like the Lord Himself, “to serve rather than be served”, in accord with the purposes of the Institute. It is in this spirit that they take the responsibility to command, when necessary. Above all, their role is to promote listening and fraternal dialogue, foster discernment, and build up genuine brotherhood, a seed of the Good News. (C. 87).

As the new community at LaValla took shape, Marcellin eventually moved from the Presbytery to join his community of brothers in humble lodgings. This action was very significant: he wished to be with them and share in their life as a servant-leader. He shared their life both at LaValla and at the Hermitage and he spent himself on behalf of the Brothers. He had the following to say to them,

I live only for you, that every day I ask God to give you everything that is genuinely good for you, and that I would give anything, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifices, to procure that for you.
(Furet, 1989, p. 460)

Marcellin fostered fraternal dialogue with the Brothers. In March 1822, a former De La Salle aspirant asked to be admitted to the Marist group by Champagnat. The Founder had his doubts, but reluctantly agreed to do so when the young man promised to bring other recruits to La Valla. After some weeks he turned up with a group (whom he had deceived into thinking he was taking them to the De La Salle novitiate) asking admission again for himself and also for all the group. At the time, Marcellin was experiencing a critical lack of vocations and he was sorely tempted to accept them. He wasn't sure what to do in the situation and so he gathered the senior brothers of the community and sought their advice. A servant-leader values the opinion of those in his charge.

Attentive listening and interpreting the signs of the times characterised Marcellin's life. Aware of the lack of provision for schooling in his rural setting, "he became concerned about providing better educational opportunities for the children and young people. He was also preoccupied with helping to foster their religious development and experience of God's love" (Sammon, 2013).

A listening ear and humility in servant leadership

Listening is also a key way through which leaders demonstrate respect and appreciation of others. (*Russell, 2001, p. 80*).

Our Lord loved those who followed him. He came as a Saviour and servant-leader par excellence. He was among his disciples not to be served but as one to serve (Lk 22:27). Jesus' approach to leadership challenged and disturbed the consciences of the religious leaders of his time.

For us Marists the apron is a suitable symbol of our service in ministry. In Philippians, we read: "The Lord emptied himself and took the form of a slave and at the same time humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2: 7 – 8).

Our Lord who gave a striking example of service by washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper:

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (*John 13: 12-15*)

To quote the strategic plan of our General Administration (2017-2025): “We seek to grow in the following qualities: service, joy, simplicity, respect, compassion and integrity. Along with these, we give pride of place to: accompaniment, team-building, innovation, dialogue.” In this line, Russell and Stone (2002) argued that listening is the critical component for other servant-leader attributes including demonstration of respect, appreciation of others, development of trust, delegation of authority, and empowerment of others.

The art of listening in servant leadership

In my experience of the role of leadership, possessing a quality of a listening ear attaches a great value to the recognition of the dignity of the other person.

“According to Greenleaf’s writings, a servant leader has to display a number of special skills like listening receptively, persuading and articulating and communicating ideas effectively.” (Rennaker, 2008, p. 82). And Greenleaf goes on to indicate that a leader’s listening disposition causes followers to identify the leader as a servant leader.

In the *Empowerment of others* Kiechel (1995), reported from an interview with Rosenblum that, “Servant leadership at its heart is an

openness, an ability to listen and an ability to speak in a way that engages people directly affected by the choices to be made” (Rennaker, 2008, p. 125).

I would like to conclude with the inspiring words of Pope Francis (2016, January 24) on listening and its key role in all human, communicative and leadership processes:

... We must *first listen*. Communicating means sharing, and sharing demands listening and acceptance. Listening is much more than simply hearing. Hearing is about receiving information, while listening is about communication, and calls for closeness. Listening allows us to get things right, and not simply to be passive onlookers, users or consumers. Listening also means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

The following questions would be useful tools in the attainment of a more healthy interpersonal relationship between a servant leader and the follower.

1. What leads to cultivating a more attentive, open, and listening ear?
2. What are the effects of attentive listening on servant leadership and on the people with whom we work or serve?

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CHAPTER 9



Sentinels of the Dawn

Foresee: The Prophetic Imagination

Br. Emili Turú
Superior General
(2009 – 2017)

It was 1993. At the end of the General Chapter I was invited to record a few words for a video aimed at the Spanish-speaking Marist communities. I don't actually remember anything I said in the video, but to this day I still remember the message of the Brother who did a recording before me, and who I had the chance to listen to live: Br. Basilio Rueda.

At the time, I remember being very surprised to hear him say – with his usual composure and self-assuredness – that big changes were imminent at the Institute. And, from my lack of experience and my naivety, I wondered exactly what he might be referring to.

In 2017, 24 years after that recording, enough time had passed for me to be able to understand the scope of Br. Basilio's words. In preparation for the feast of Saint Marcellin, I wanted to recover that video, to incorporate into my own message. And these were Br. Basilio's opening words:

I believe that the message we must give the Brothers, especially the heart of the message, is to tell them that the Institute is reaching a kind of turning point in its history. A turning point that will be marked by a deeper fidelity and, at the same time, by very important changes. *(Cited by Turú, 2017, 6 June)*

I believe that Br. Basilio embodied very well a characteristic of prophetic and servant leadership, which we will deal with in the pages that follow: foresight. As we will see, it is difficult to describe this skill in one single word¹, since it is an experience that goes far beyond a dictionary definition².

When many of us in the Institute were unable to see beyond our limited area of mission, with little global vision and little foresight, Br. Basilio anticipated a time of great change and reminded us all of “the need to make a major change in our lives, in our communities, and in our works.”

Br. Basilio's capacity for foresight was evident throughout his 18 years as Superior General. But it was evident even before this time, and this undoubtedly influenced his election as leader of the Institute in the turbulent 1960s.

I have often wondered how Br. Basilio managed to maintain his calm and prescience (a synonym for foresight) when the Institute was apparently sinking. In 1985, when his mandate ended, there were 3,594 fewer Brothers than when he started in 1967. How was he able to stay on course for so many years, amidst voices of mistrust and resistance? How did he not become discouraged and wonder if the direction taken was the right one?

It is this skill that we want to talk about in the following pages. A very important skill, difficult to live with and certainly not easy to describe. This is probably why it is an understudied characteristic, as Larry Spears (2000), a great scholar of Greenleaf's work, acknowledged: "Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but one most deserving of careful attention." (p. 4)

1. Foresight as an Essential Structural Dynamic of Leadership

Our first approach to the meaning of this leadership skill is provided by Greenleaf (2002). According to this author:

a. "Foresight is the 'lead' that the Leader has"

Many who are in a position of leadership do not actually lead, but rather react to events as they unfold. More than once I have heard leaders say that they feel like firefighters, running from one place to another putting out fires, without time for calm reflection.

There are abundant current examples of loss of leadership that stems from a failure to foresee what reasonably could have been foreseen, and from failure to act on that knowledge while the leader had freedom to act. (p. 40)

Greenleaf (2002) saw foresight as part of the leader's ethical commitment. And, therefore, according to him, failing or refusing to foresee events should be considered a lack of ethics.

b. The Leader with Foresight: Historian, Analyst, Prophet

“One is at once, in every moment of time, historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet –not three separate roles. This is what the practicing leader is, every day of his or her life.” (p. 39). Historian, because he or she learns from the past; analyst because he or she studies the present moment in depth; prophet because he or she intuits the future.

The prudent person is one who constantly thinks of now as the moving concept in which past, present moment, and future are one organic unity. And this requires living by a sort of rhythm that encourages a high level of intuitive insight about the whole gamut of events from the indefinite past, through the present moment, to the indefinite future. (p. 39)

c. Foresight, a Matter of Trust

How do you maintain serenity – asked Greenleaf – when uncertainty abounds in this turbulent world? It is a matter of trust or faith. Because the leader who practises foresight believes that, if one enters into a situation prepared with the necessary experience and knowledge at the conscious level, in that situation the intuitive insight necessary for one's optimal performance will be forthcoming.

One follows the steps of the creative process, which requires that one stay with conscious analysis as far as it will carry one, and then withdraw, release the analytical pressure, if only for a moment, in full confidence that a resolving insight will come. (p. 39)

In conclusion, we can say that Greenleaf sees the foresighted leader as someone who knows how to combine reflection and study with intuition, as in any art. Decision-making, for example, is more than just a logical process, although it does not exclude it. “The shape of some future events can be calculated from trend data. But... there is usually an information gap that has to be bridged, and one must cultivate the conditions that favour intuition.” (p. 38)

Having analysed the data carefully and in depth, one does not rush into decision-making, but tries to see reality from another perspective, which we can call **intuitive insight**, and, in the end, perhaps makes a decision that seems to go against the data analysed.

Think of Pope John XXIII when he convened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. A good number of influential cardinals of the Roman Curia tried to vigorously dissuade the Pope. And there were certainly objective facts that would have made anyone doubt the wisdom of such a decision. The Pope studied, listened, prayed... and on 25 January 1959, three months after his election, he convened the Council before the College of Cardinals, which “welcomed him with expressions of jubilation and fervent wishes” (John XXIII, 1960, AAS 52, p. 433), in the Pope’s own words, although we suspect that the expressions of jubilation were not many.

As soon as Pope John XXIII understood that a Council was needed, nothing could stop him, in spite of all the difficulties, which were not few. It is interesting to note the words he used to refer to this decision: “**Inspiration from the Most High** seems to us the thinking which from the beginning of our pontificate sprang to our mind, like the **flower of**

an unexpected spring to convene an Ecumenical Council” (AAS 53, p. 433). Inspiration from the Most High and the flower of an unexpected spring. A “*prophetic intuition*”, according to Pope Francis (2013). A beautiful way of defining foresight: prophetic intuition, which springs forth as an unexpected gift, and which is received as inspiration.

The ability to do this, according to Greenleaf (2002), is “the essential structural dynamic of leadership” (p. 39). It is a quality we recognise in Pope John XXIII when he convoked the Council, and in Marcellin Champagnat when he decided to found the Marist Institute on 2 January 1817. However, the resolve of these two men of God should not be confused with the arrogance of those who believe they have all the answers, or the stubbornness of those who go ahead with their ideas without listening to anyone else.

Peter Senge (2002) reminds us of this in the epilogue he wrote for the 25th anniversary edition of Greenleaf’s book, to which we have been repeatedly referring. Citing the philosopher Eric Hoffer, he stresses that the fundamental distinction between commitment and fanaticism is uncertainty.

A fanatic is certain. A fanatic has the answer. A fanatic knows what really is happening. A fanatic has the plan. When you understand this, you realize that fanaticism is not limited to just the extreme fringes of civilized society. Fanaticism is alive and well in mainstream society. It arises in all kinds of positions of authority. In fact, I would argue it is the first and most fundamental abuse of all positions of authority. (Senge, 2002, p. 353)

And he goes on to say:

Greenleaf understood this as well. In his discussion about commitment, he says, “Finally, one must make choices. Perhaps one chooses the same aim or hypothesis again and again. But, it is

always a fresh and open choice, and it is always under a shadow of doubt.” It is always under a shadow of doubt. From my standpoint, all true commitment lives in the domain of doubt. (Senge, 2002, p. 354)

There are countless examples from the life of Father Champagnat that show this openness of spirit of our founder. He had serene inner certainty that he was following God’s will, but was open to the possibility that he could be wrong.

2. Presencing

In addition to Greenleaf’s study of this leadership skill called foresight, there have been other approaches to the concept, albeit using other terms.

I find particularly significant the contribution made by a group of organisational development scholars, who jointly published a book entitled *Presence* in 2004. (Senge et al.)

At the origin of this reflection is Peter Senge’s observation about his students at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). He offered all of them the same tools and methods for organisational change, many of which are included in his famous book *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 1990/2006), but the results were very different, and depended on the person who applied them. Why were the same tools effective in the hands of some and totally ineffective in the hands of others?

Otto Scharmer took up the challenge to answer that question and carried out a study, interviewing 130 leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators, as well as actively participating in processes of change in companies, governments and communities. The result of the study can be found in the multi-author book *Presence* and in another book, written by Scharmer (2009) alone, called *Theory U*.

An important conclusion reached by the author of *Theory U* was that leadership was either successful or unsuccessful depending on the quality of attention and intention that the leader brought to the situation in which they had to intervene.

Two leaders in the same circumstances doing the same thing can bring about completely different outcomes, depending on the inner place from which each operates. I learned this from the late Bill O'Brien, who'd served as CEO of Hanover Insurance. When I asked him to sum up his most important learning experience in leading profound change, he responded, "The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor." The nature of this inner place in leaders is something of a mystery to us. (Scharmer, 2008, pp. 52-59)

What makes the difference in any intervention, then, is not what is done or how it is done, but who does it: "Who we are and the inner place or source from which we operate, both individually and collectively" (Senge et al., 2004, p. 5). This is what Scharmer refers to as the "blind spot", because most leaders or scholars dwell on what to do or how to do it, but ignore that "inner place or source" from which they act, and this makes them ineffective in achieving deep and lasting change.

Greenleaf highlighted the fundamental importance of foresight for leadership; the new perspective developed by the authors of *Presence* consists of the attention they paid to the source of that skill and, therefore, to how to cultivate it. In fact, the title of the book already indicates how it is done: **presence**. A word that is dear to the Marist tradition, and which refers both to living consciously in the present moment ("living in the presence of God"), and to being close to people, especially the children and young people entrusted to our care ("being present").

When this presence is lived in a profound way, it leads to a deep experience that is difficult to express in words, as we said earlier when we

spoke of foresight. This is why the word “presencing” was invented, which did not previously exist in English, and which is a blended word formed from “presence” and “sensing”. In Spanish I think that the combination of the verbs *presenciar* and *presentir* could capture the sense of what we want to express, but in this text we will use the English word.

“The real challenge in understanding presencing lies not in its abstractness but in the subtlety of the experience.” (Senge, et al., 2004, p. 89)

What experience are we referring to? The authors of *Presence* identify it with mystical experience, which is expressed differently in different religious traditions (Senge et al., 2004, p. 14), but which have in common a process of letting go, as well as an experience of deep presence or communion, which allows us to see reality as it is, and the future as it emerges.

We chose the term “presencing” to describe this state because it is about becoming totally present – to the larger space or field around us, to an expanded sense of self, and, ultimately, to what is emerging through us. (Senge et al., 2004, p. 91)

Dung Q. Tran and Larry C. Spears (2019) ask in a jointly written article whether, given the characteristics of foresight, it is not an ability one is born with, implying that if you were born with it, all the better for you, and if you were not, there is nothing you can do about it. In fact, they state that “all other characteristics can be consciously developed” (p. 80), from which one deduces that foresight cannot be developed: either you have it or you don't.

I find it difficult to accept such statements, because I am convinced that all people are born with this potential ability and that, like all other abilities, one can either foster its development or block it.

As a Christian, I believe that the Spirit of God dwells within us and that we can all be guided by his breath, if we allow it. It is just a matter of creating the conditions in our life that will allow us to access that intimate and sacred place, the “blind spot” that Otto Scharmer speaks about. And this requires a certain constant personal discipline in the exercise of contemplative practices, starting with meditation.

Presencing is for us, in my view, an invitation to live as much as possible in the here and now, and thus have access to the God who is presence, the source of all creativity, vision, energy.

The current period of transition that we are experiencing globally at all levels – society, Church, Institute – needs people who courageously assume leadership and commit to creating the necessary conditions within themselves so that foresight, and prophetic intuition can emerge in the service of others.

3. Sentinels of the Dawn

Just as important as the cultivation of prophetic foresight or intuition is the ability to share it and communicate it appropriately to others.

In this respect, the prophetic tradition of the People of God enlightens us on how to exercise this kind of leadership, when what it involves is illuminating the future and awakening hope. In particular, the prophets who emerged around the time of the Exile were extremely timely, guiding the people at key moments of transition before, during and after the Exile. Both Jeremiah and Second Isaiah use poetic language because it is the most appropriate language to express their intuitions.

Jeremiah’s language is free, porous and impressionistic – he is a poet... Poets have no advice to give to people. They only want people to see differently, to re-vision life. They are not coercive.

They only try to stimulate, surprise, hint and give nuance, nothing more. They cannot do more, because they are making available a world that does not exist beyond their imagination; but their offer of this imaginative world is necessary to give freedom of action. (Brueggemann, 1986, p. 23-24)

Prophets, like the poets they are, speak porously. They use a kind of language that is not exhausted at first hearing. They leave many things open, ambiguous, still to be discerned after much reflection. The purpose of porous language is to leave both the poem and the reality to which it points open for the experience of the listener. Poets believe in the capacity of people to continue the image, to finalise the thought from their own experience. Are not the parables of Jesus a clear testimony that the Kingdom is offered to us through the imagination, the poetic discourse?

Brueggemann (1986), speaking of Second Isaiah, states that it is “the supreme example of liberated poetic imagination in the Old Testament” (p. 96). And he adds:

The practice of such poetic imagination is the most subversive, redemptive act that a leader of a faith community can undertake in the midst of exiles... because it holds the potential of unleashing a community of power and action that finally will not be contained by any imperial restrictions or definitions of reality. (p. 96)

Poetry does not describe what happens. It evokes images and suggests insights in Israel that were only available in that poetry. It generates hope. A hope that makes it possible for the community to set out on the path and leave behind the dominant empire. We know that, as Paul Ricoeur says, “People change not because of ethical impulses, but because of a transformed imagination.” (Brueggemann, 1986, p. 25)

Let us recall the use of prophetic imagination exercised by other prophets closer to us in history. For example, Martin Luther King, when

he drew together and rallied thousands of people by proclaiming “I have a dream”. It was not a plan of action, but a dream that connected with the aspirations of many thousands of others.

And recall the poetic words of Pope John XXIII when he opened the Second Vatican Council: “The Council begins, the adolescence of a glorious day of light for the Church. It is scarcely dawn, but how gently the first rays of the rising sun caress our hearts! The air is holy here, pierced with thrills of joy”³. Not only did the convocation itself kindle hope in many people around the world, but also its evocative and poetic language, reminding us that the transformation of the Church would take time: it is scarcely dawn!

The image of the dawn was also used repeatedly by Br. Basilio, and by other Superiors General who came after him, rekindling our hope in the face of a transfigured reality, which prophetic intuition considers already realised, but which can only be described in evocative poetic language.

All of us Champagnat Marists, each in our own leadership role – and this applies to absolutely everyone – feel called to allow foresight to emerge in us, that prophetic intuition that allows us and many others in the world to be sentinels of the longed-for dawn of a world where we can all live as brothers and sisters.

*To know how to wait, knowing
at the same time to force
the hours of that urgency
that does not allow waiting.*

Pedro Casaldáliga (1984, p. 95)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. You must surely know of someone who embodies or embodied the skill of foresight and who, in some way, has inspired you. What characteristics of that person do you think most inspired you? What can you learn from them to apply in your own life?
2. If you had to describe “foresight” or “prophetic intuition” in your own words, what would you say?
3. What practices could you apply – or continue to apply – in your life that foster the development of foresight?
4. With regard to your service, or responsibility, in what aspects or areas do you consider it important to be a person of foresight?
5. How can you intentionally diversify your perspectives and ways of looking at the world or your institution?

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Notes

1 Greenleaf used the words *foresight* and *prescience* indistinctively. (Cambridge Dictionary & RAE, 2021).

2 Cambridge Dictionary. *Foresight is the ability to judge correctly what is going to happen in the future and plan your actions based on this knowledge.*

3 *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* was personally and completely drafted by the Pope, according to Bishop Loris Capovilla, who was his personal secretary. The text we cite here is that offered by Bishop Capovilla, which preserves the original poetic tone, which was lost when it was translated into Latin (the only official language at that time), and then again translated into Italian and other languages. Cf. *Tantum aurora est*. Discourse by Archbishop Loris Francesco Capovilla in the Basilica di Sant'Eufemia in Piacenza. (2009, 28 October)

CHAPTER 10



Administration: a Leadership of Service

Br. Libardo Garzón Duque
Bursar General
(2015-2021)

Those responsible for resources at the service of the Institute take good care of them, inspired by the mission they take on within the Church. In their management, they show great concern for the common good, for justice, poverty, charity and the mission of the Institute.
(C 101)

Introduction

This reflection is intended to be a little introduction to the big world of the practice of administration, from the perspective of servant leadership. In this, there are some elements of the Gospel, some current documents of the Church, the Marist tradition, personal experience and some contributions regarding how to recreate the art of administration as a service to the needs of others.

One of the characteristics of a good leader is administrative vision. When the leader of an institution, despite having excellent pastoral skills, lacks administrative skills, that person creates serious confusion, sometimes with profound repercussions for the management of both human talent and the other resources at the service of the institution. The way leadership is exercised has a powerful impact on all organizations, so it requires much more than good will. All forms of leadership are based on three basic ingredients: character, administration and experience (Gini & Green, 2014).

Speaking of Administering...

The word “administer” is made up of two parts: “**ad**” and “**minister**”. The prefix “ad” means “towards”, and the root “minister” means “**to serve**” (Taylor, 2012). The life of the one who administers is focused on serving, attending to the needs of others, sharing responsibility and greatly enlarging the leadership by empowering the leadership of others. In Old English, the word “steward” (steward) means “house keeper”, a person in charge of managing another’s home. To act as an administrator

is to act as an “agent” for another. Administration, therefore, suggests being “directed by others”, being “responsible to others”, being at the “service of others”. Administration always has to do with others (Gini & Green, 2014). As Richard Waters (2013) says in his research on the role of administration within leadership, the relationship between those who administer an organization and its recipients is very important since their actions have an impact on economic, social, cultural or political well-being. This requires responsibility, accountability and the promotion of transparent relationships between the interested parties in order to ensure the success of the organization in the long term.

The administrator, viewed as a servant leader, attends to the needs of others, paying special attention to the most vulnerable, seeks the common good and focuses on taking care of what has been entrusted to him or her, all the while promoting the development of the institution with a view to the future. As Pope Francis (2014) says, the faithful and prudent administrator has the task of reliably taking care of what has been entrusted to him, aware of the responsibility to safeguard and diligently manage his own goods, in the light of his evangelizing mission and with particular attention towards those most in need.

Organizations are dynamic systems, in which each of the members, with their particular roles, contributes to the development of the mission. The exercise of leadership is crucial to help harmonize these roles, in order to further the vision of the organization. The leader, from the administrative perspective, motivates and influences the organization, encouraging enterprise, good performance and social well-being. The role of the leader goes beyond numbers, beyond accounting, beyond business management. The leader integrates everyone and everything into the task of making the mission and vision of the work and the organization as a whole viable.

The Servant Leader as Administrator

Care for Others

One of the most important characteristics of the administrator from a servant leadership perspective is the ability to care for the people for whom he or she is responsible. As Morela Hernández says, leaders have an enormous responsibility to act not only as caregivers, but also as role models for future generations. Their behavior has a great influence on the development of future leaders (Hernandez, 2009).

Taylor (2012) in his article, *The Servant Leader: A New Paradigm*, affirms that “the leadership style that one adopts is based on one’s worldview, and on how one views life” (p. 10). He also analyses, from a Christian perspective, some characteristics of the servant leader: first, such a leader shares a vision and the leadership with the team, sets the tone by personal example and promotes a collective effort. This kind of leader is attentive to the needs of others, values them and forms in them a capacity for leadership through the distribution of tasks and sharing of decision making. This leader promotes the leadership of each one in his/her own areas of ability and skill towards the achievement of the common vision and promotes the development of the team, encouraging their creativity and helping them to realize their dreams. In this way, the people under his/her responsibility feel satisfied and strengthen their own capacity for leadership. Lambert (2000), cited by Taylor (2012), says that people in an organization, have the right, ability and the responsibility to be leaders. Finally, the servant leader creates community, enriches the lives of others and builds better social environments, promoting a healthy communication of life, autonomy and freedom. Mateos and Camacho (2000) expand these concepts when they affirm that this type of leadership does not create dependency or subordination, does not permit superiority, nor create ranks.

Beyond the Care of Economic and Financial Resources

The leader, from the perspective of the administration, manages the assets at the disposal of the organization with a sense of responsibility, thinking about the common good and seeking sustainability over time. Leaders feel called to go beyond “simple administration, beyond themselves, their own comforts and security (Pope Francis, 2013). Leaders manage funds with a view to human beings, so that finance serves and does not govern (Lluch Frechina, 2015). In such a way there is concern to help the poor in an atmosphere of solidarity, where no one lacks what is necessary, where everyone is respected and valued. It is fundamentally about promoting an ethical financial system which fosters life. In a society where money and power have become almost the fundamental objective of many people, Pope Francis (2013) challenges us:

It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 80)

The Church challenges us

Today, Pope Francis is one of the most influential figures in the world. He is recognized as a leader who invites participation, adapting to the different contexts he is addressing. He recognizes the needs of others and feels in need of other people. His writings are simple, understandable and capture profoundly the clamor of today’s world. He presents himself not so much as someone who has authority, but as someone who needs help: “Pray for me” (Osorio Cuervo, 2019).

The Church invites the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL/CIVCSVA) to manage their works with a view to the future, faithful to the initial charismatic intuition and with evangelical impact. This requires people with leadership skills, capable of discerning and allowing themselves to be helped by external experts. They need to be capable to work with other institutions and bring skills and abilities together in order to work in networks. From this perspective, he calls us to promote relationships based on principles of communion and fraternity that allow us to work in joint ventures. This presupposes coordination and sharing at the planning and management levels, a culture and praxis that guarantee the continuity of the works, as well as their evangelical efficacy and economic sustainability (CICLSAL, 2018).

The Marist Experience

Father Champagnat could count on the support of his fellow priests. After two of them left the Hermitage, after careful thought and much prayer, he decided to write to the Archbishop to beg him to send someone who could help him in the administration of the affairs of the congregation. At the same time, he went to see Monsieur Gardette, the rector of the major seminary, to inform him of his situation and ask him to intercede with the archbishop so that he would respond to his request (Furet, 1989). He was aware that he could not carry out his leadership mission alone, that he needed other people to help him, since the number of brothers and the number of schools were increasing in the new Institute.

The experience of Father Champagnat and many others, throughout the history of the Institute, give us numerous testimonies from brothers and lay people who, with their leadership style, have shaped the life and mission that we have today. His vision and sense of responsibility in the way he exercised his leadership of Marist life and mission, encourages us to continue in a dynamic search for answers to the calls of the Church and society.

I would like to highlight the contribution of Brother Philogone, who was an excellent leader in his time. In his biography, it is said that he stood out as an educator, an administrator and organizer, in the way he took care of everything in the house, put everything in its place and made sure that order reigned in all things. He cared about his brothers and his students. He was more than a father; he was like a mother, tender, delicate, meticulous in caring for each one, both in health and in illness. Throughout his life as Assistant General, he knew how to unite authority, characterized by respect, and love that gives of itself and sacrifices itself (Petits Freres de Marie, 1900). This allowed him to produce wonderful and abundant fruit. He was responsible for the extraordinary development that his province experienced under his guidance. When he started, there were forty-nine establishments and two hundred and fifty brothers. At his death, the number of houses was ninety-four, and the religious numbered almost five hundred and fifty. It should be noted that as a result of his experience, he wrote the Domestic Manual (Philogone, 1874), a kind of vademecum of the local economy for the use of the communities (Lanfrey, 2018)

In recent history, Brother Benito Arbués, as Superior General, wrote a circular in which he invited the Marists to manage the goods at the disposal of the life and mission of the Institute, as humble administrators, and to use renewed methods that make the administration of the assets efficient in a way that is inspired by the Gospel (Arbues, 2000). This insight of Brother Benito continues to be very challenging in our own times.

The XXII General Chapter invites us to exercise leadership that is increasingly co-responsible between brothers and lay people, keeping in mind the global family and renouncing any structures and attitudes that do not foster that ideal. The General Chapter also invites us to employ strategies that allow for sharing human and financial resources, particularly with newer parts of the Institute, in the service of Marist life and mission. In this sense, the project “In Communion and Solidarity”, which is part of the strategic plan of the General Administration, overseen by the office of the Bursar General, seeks to optimize the coordinated management of

resources and internal solidarity that lead to the development of a strong sense of interdependence and sustainability of Marist life and mission (Marist Brothers, 2018).

Finally, the Constitutions of the Marist Brothers, which were recently approved, invite us to administer Marist resources in a transparent, responsible, efficient, sustainable and trustworthy way. These are goods at the service of the work of evangelization, of solidarity and communion, in accordance with our charism (C 98).

Challenges for Marist leaders in the Field of Administration

The experience of Covid-19, as well as multiple situations that have been lived through in the past, reveal the passion of brothers and lay people for the mission, as well as their creative capacity to inspire, transmit confidence for the future and give concrete answers to arising needs in different contexts.

The XXII General Chapter invited us to become aware of the role that as Marists we are called to assume today, when it posed the following questions: “Who does God want us to be in this emerging world?” And “What does God want us to do in this emerging world?” These questions must continue to resonate deeply, especially in those of us who in some way exercise a leadership role in the institutions we have. Prophetic and servant leadership, very much in line with the principles of the Gospel, opens up for us a wide range of possibilities as we try to make these calls from God come alive in our mission. The following paragraphs are intended to pose some challenges, among many others, for Marist leaders from an administrative perspective.

Personal Integrity

People are considered to have integrity when they are honest and when they act in a correct, transparent way. Such a person is someone in whom you can place your trust. Leaders with these qualities take time to think about their own values, as well as those of the institution. This idea is also expressed by Siliceo et al (2001), when they say that leaders model the values and behaviours that they want to see in others. In addition, such leaders are aware of their responsibilities towards other people (Gini & Green, 2014).

The leader is called to put service above self-interest. “Service is the best teacher to learn to control our own ego” (Siliceo Aguilar et al, p. 86). This vision coincides with that presented by Gini & Green (2014) when they say that the essence of leadership and of all forms of authority is the subordination of oneself or of one’s ego to the needs and desires of a community. The authority and the ability to persuade others is transmitted by the passion with which such leaders live their values and the way they exercise leadership. In some cases, leaders are called to deal with the fascination of power, in order to make their role a mission in a spiritual sense (Murad, 2015).

Strategic Vision

Leaders in the field of administration are called to have a fundamentally strategic orientation, although in our case, they also need to balance that with a day-to-day operational approach (Spears, 2010). This daily management, without losing sight of the long-term vision, requires discipline and practice. The servant leader integrates the institution’s commitment with the expectations of the different people involved through creative solutions aimed at achieving the institutional vision. Such leaders foster collaborative relationships within the institution and between institutions and is attentive to what is going on all around as well as its

implications for the institution. They are loyal to the institutional vision, commit themselves to its development and influence the way to make it a reality, helping the members of the institution to pull together in order to achieve it. The commitment of all parties to achieve the vision becomes an essential element for the future of an institution.

It is interesting to see how Pope Francis unites different groups to address fundamental issues for the future of society and to transmit his vision of the Church, as well as the search for answers to safeguard not only society, but the planet itself.

Shared Leadership and the Culture of Care

This kind of leadership and culture creates the conditions for everyone to feel heard and co-responsible for leadership. This promotes healthy relationships and dynamics within the group. It helps all the people involved to develop the mission that is suited to them. The growth of each one is supported as well as the organization as a whole and in this culture, work is done to build a community of trust within the organization itself. This kind of leadership promotes a culture of caring, both for the people as well as for the other available resources in order to carry out the mission. Such a leader is concerned about the interests of employees (Caldwell et al., 2008) and takes care of them.

One thing that has been learned from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) has been the perception of individual vulnerability (the possibility of suffering disease, pain, fragility, limitation, finiteness and death), as well as social vulnerability (fragility which people suffer when they are caught up in certain environments or socio-economic situations). This challenges us to foster a management style that has solidarity as a central element at all levels of our institutions.

Culture of Trust

To inspire the team, the leader must be perceived as a person who is open to dialogue, generous, integrated and competent in knowing how to get things done. Reinke (2004), citing Greenleaf (1977), suggests that servant leadership improves the performance of the organization because it fosters relationships of trust. This attitude is fundamental in the exercise of leadership, as a requirement for empowerment, otherwise the leader ends up taking on the roles of others, making it difficult for processes to flow normally. Caldwell (2002), citing Senge (1990), noted that “organizations ultimately depended on the behavior of those they trusted” (p. 157). It is important that directors help to create an organizational climate that promotes this (Mallen et al., 2019). The greatest challenge for a leader is creating an atmosphere in which potential leaders can thrive (Maxwell, 2008).

Make the Complex Simple

The exercise of leadership from an administrative perspective is becoming increasingly complex. The multiplicity of factors that converge in organizations like ours mean that there are no single answers. The character of those who lead, and how secure they feel in themselves, encourages or does not encourage that the processes of the organization are simplified. The ability to make complex things simple is an art that requires knowledge, experience, empathy and communication skills.

In a society in which everything is constantly changing, the leader of an organization is called upon to explore coherent and simple solutions. This way of acting generates trust and the capacity to adhere to the proposals presented as a way of contributing to the development of the organization and of society itself.

Nelson Mandela, one of the great inspirations for leaders, said that a leader is like a shepherd: he stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind (Mandela, 1994). With an unshakeable spirit of freedom, he knew how to transmit his vision. He generated confidence in his people and managed to bring about that an issue as complex as the apartheid system be overcome for the good of South Africa and of all humanity.

Conclusions

Servant leadership involves, first and foremost, a commitment to serving the needs of other people. This requires attention, openness, and the ability to listen. The foundation and *raison d'être* of all directing authority is to make the human condition more secure, happier and more productive (Gini & Green, 2014).

Leadership in an institution is more than the consequence of holding a position and is more powerful when it is the result of the relationship between personal characteristics, attitudes and the needs to which it responds. The leader will not always substitute or change personal behavior for working as a group, but will try to maximize what is available for the organization based on rational principles. By identifying with the institution, leaders will see themselves as administrators, who are responsible and committed to the mission that has been entrusted to them.

In this new post-pandemic reality, servant leaders, in the field of administration, are called upon to rethink their mission with vision and creativity. In the same way, the management of resources in order to serve the charism and the mission will be fundamental. All of this must be done in a responsible and transparent fashion, fostering communion, solidarity and sustainability.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does this reflection on the administration as servant leadership evoke in you?
2. What do you think should be the characteristics of a good administrative leader from the perspective of servant leadership?
3. From your personal experience, what challenges does a servant leader face in the field of administration today?
4. Bring to mind someone who has impacted you by their way of exercising servant leadership from an administrative and managerial perspective.
5. What good practices could we learn from society and the Church in order to have an administration that is truly of service?
6. What can our way of being administrators say to society?

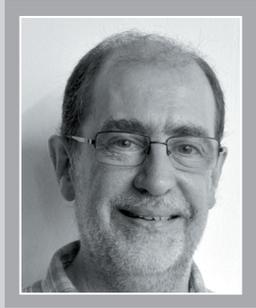
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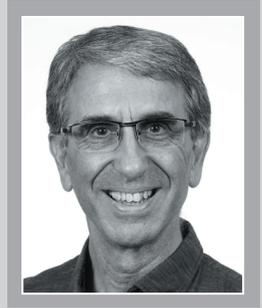
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CHAPTER 11



Br. Gabriel Villa-Real
Vicar Provincial
of L'Hermitage



Br. Pere Ferré
Provincial
of L'Hermitage

**Leadership Committed
to Prioritising People:
Growing Together,
Accompanying and
Empowering each other**

1. The Experience of Assuming Leadership Roles in Tandem¹

The current configuration of the L'Hermitage Province began its journey in 2003, a geographical, cultural and linguistic mosaic made up of France, Catalonia, Greece, Hungary, Algeria and Switzerland.

a. Building a Leadership Style

The new Hermitage province is the result of the coming together of three provinces: Beaucamps-Saint Genis, Midi-Centre-West Our Lady of the Hermitage, and Catalonia. Uniting three realities into one is a delicate exercise because they had to be integrated into a shared project. Without absorbing or juxtaposing. Without eliminating historical and cultural differences nor allowing them to become a problem. Unity in diversity but not necessarily in uniformity. Strengthen common ties. All levels are affected by a restructuring including, in a special way, the exercise of leadership. From an existing three provincials and councils there is then one. From the outset the figure of Vicar Provincial was created as a major superior. Where you want to go is known, but some paths have never been traveled. The new leaders need to travel his new paths, respecting the history, geography, language, culture and pastoral care of each person and group. It could be said that, in an almost imperceptible way across their various mandates, the provincial and vicar have been building a 'tandem' leadership such as has been recognised in practice by Brothers and lay people themselves. The tandem is a bicycle for two people, each with his or her seat and pedals. It fosters collaboration, teamwork, complementarity, synchronising one's efforts.

We, the two authors of this contribution, having spent years together on the provincial council, embrace this style of leadership with

¹ The outline and writing of this chapter are the work of Br Lluís Serra. He has given shape to the ideas shared by Brothers Pere Ferré and Gabriel Villa-Real across a series of joint interviews. Our reflection focusses on the theme suggested to us: "Leadership from the perspective of people's growth".

gratitude for the work of those who have gone before us and a willing commitment. We are more aware of the meaning of tandem leadership from lived experience. Let's move then to describe some of the more significant features of this model, based on our practice.

b. Characterising this Practice

This style of governance is substantially based on unity in diversity, team action, internal communication and emotional stability.

Unity in diversity does not blur the differences but harmonizes them when based on a shared project. In this case, two different roles, two ways of thinking, two different perceptions, allow better progress in solving issues. The pressure is regulated. The necessary time is taken, without sluggishness or precipitation, and the solution becomes clearer thanks to a wider view. When confrontation is required, as in complicated situations, verbalizing is of great importance.

Far from diminishing responsibility, working as a team assumes that decisions are taken jointly. There is awareness that some issues are closer to the role each one plays. However, the functions are embraced interchangeably. It is clearly seen that communication is fluid on the issues addressed by the two. Decision-making is a task achieved with poise and transparency, whether it concerns individuals or groups (institutions, associations, ...).

Communication between the two leaders becomes an opportunity to rethink and relook together at what is communicated. There can thus be clearer perception and greater objectivity. Animation and governance tasks require an essential awareness of limits. Without this, impediments arise which make it difficult to function properly. Returning to our image of the bicycle, while each has two pedals, direction is determined by the front handlebar. It is therefore necessary to know who has the last word at any particular time.

The area of emotions is extremely delicate. Even more so in what concerns human relations. Working within this model of governance helps one to exercise freedom and trust at the same time as it allows one to overcome fears, indecision and blockages that, otherwise, would paralyse shared work.

2. Growing Together in Leadership

In the exercise of leadership, there are a series of variables of the different calibre that affect people. There are some that enhance lines of work and learning. The importance of only some of the more significant ones is emphasised here, without intending to produce a comprehensive list. Others are noted briefly as points that should be considered so as not to endanger or lessen the quality of leadership.

a. Lines of Work and Learning

What stands out here is listening, openness, self-knowledge, discernment, service and a focus on mission.

Listening, essential, attentive to words and silence, favours empathy, dispenses with psychological complications, welcomes without prejudging, respects personal rhythms, becomes aware of the message received, faces complex situations. The person's face, their non-verbal language, the attention in their gaze ... are key in communication and harmony and do not come automatically. In interpersonal dialogue or in interviews, it is necessary to avoid any behaviour that suggests disconnection, such as looking away from the person, glancing at the clock, cutting off the person when the other has not been notified that an important call might arrive, ... These behaviours block communication and relegate the other to a secondary role.

Openness is essential in order to consider alternatives that allow new mindsets and paths for reflection, which don't look for immediate

solutions and responses. Closing down doesn't help. Instead, broaden horizons, be creative and make decisions for the future.

Self-knowledge generates awareness of one's own impulses and allows one to regulate them constructively, at the same time offering a better understanding of others. The propositions of the other might indirectly drain emotional reserves and distort the relationship. Awareness puts everything in perspective.

Marist leadership seeks harmony with the will of God. It is about living in an attitude of discernment to illuminate important decisions or to ensure that essential elements are not forgotten. A wisdom that must be translated into everyday practice so that the leader is not carried away by the pressures and trends of the moment.

It is important to realise that governance carries a certain degree of power. The most evangelical way to live it is to exercise this power as service. Much care is needed that this service does not hide self-serving or other types of motivation, unrelated to its purpose.

In short, leadership is framed within the scope of the ecclesial, Marist and social mission and is embodied in an historical moment. It is rooted in tradition but each person shapes and develops it in his or her own way.

b. Other points

If personal claims are not at the service of the Marist mission, if one's ego, one's image, has centre stage ... leadership is perverted, loses its nature, distorts and degenerates. Similar motivations can take over the Marist mission itself. In that case, the mission loses its meaning and becomes corrupted. You can employ different resources, strategies, approaches, but never sacrifice your specific objective. For example, a prioritized focus

on results, without taking into account other priorities such as caring for people, could be fatal.

Decision-making requires vision. When the leadership does not have it, there are formal responses, empty justifications, increased bureaucracy, creation of control bodies, reaffirmation of power ... Fears paralyse and block. Reductionist decisions are made, without vision or daring.

3. A Leadership Style for the Diversity of Ministries

Those who exercise Marist leadership are immersed in a great diversity of cultures, concrete situations and ministries entrusted to them. This fact needs to be viewed as a source of institutional enrichment, as a challenge to remain united in what is essential, and as a commitment to educational and evangelical inculturation.

Here are two ideas on this:

a. The Particularity of Marist Leadership

Three features can be distinguished: the spiritual dimension, the integration of a practical sense and a reflective spirit, and the relationship between charism and leadership.

Marist leadership is linked essentially to the spiritual dimension. Even when this dimension is less explicit, it can be contemplated and perceived from God's gaze in the context of life. Its reference points, explicit or not, come from the gospel. Considered in this way, attention to the person, focus on the Marist mission and servant leadership are prioritised.

It is obvious that a practical sense, when it is too particular, can

prioritise pragmatism over reflection. It is part of the Marist institutional culture and has its pros and cons. The goodness of practicality is not without risk and it needs to be enlightened by reflection and the spiritual dimension.

Leadership exercised from a Marist perspective can be enriched using tools found beneficial in other contexts and areas. In the collective imagination, a Marist leader does not shut him or herself off in the office but is in contact with people. However, face-to-face relationships need to be balanced with times where quiet and calm reflection come to the fore.

The relationship between charism and leadership has many points of interest. It implies going back to the sources in one's own interiority, projecting what is found there in the work of each day and embodying the strength of these roots as a way of enriching the charism.

b. Diversity of Situations and Ministries

Leadership is exercised in very diverse situations. And there is also the international dimension.

A Marist community, a school, a social project, a coordinating body, a Province or the Marist Institute itself are diverse areas. All of them require leadership in the ministry confided to them. Currently this leadership is exercised and shared by brothers, lay women and men. They all have their own characteristics and these shape their involvement and affect their development: the service asked of them, the contractual relationship if applicable, the personal, family and work balance, the level of responsibility, teamwork ...

In many cases, connecting to the Marist Institute means opening oneself to an international dimension, woven of cultures, languages, and diverse traditions. The motto for the canonization of Saint Marcellin Champagnat went along these lines: "A heart without borders." Such a

motto encourages awareness of belonging to an entity that goes beyond its own limits. It involves moving from the local to the global sphere. Furthermore, to think about the local sphere from a global perspective, an aspect that was highly emphasized at the XXII General Chapter (2017), held in Colombia. Leadership that maintains a broad vision is enriched by moving beyond one's borders and performs its role of service better.

4. Identifying Leaders

Exercising leadership in animation and governance requires a broad network of committed people, each assuming leadership in their entrusted area at their own level. As a preliminary step, there is a need to identify leaders. And to do this, three questions must be addressed: why and for what a leader is sought; what are his or her characteristics, attitudes and skills; and how to provide accompaniment.

The initial step is to answer two basic questions. The first points to why a leader is sought and concerns the area of principles. At the centre of a range of perspectives, the person will be integrated into a network of committed people who wish for the chosen person an enrichment of their life and ministry. The second, what for, concerns the operational area, a particular ministry and a specific activity.

With the responses to these two questions setting the horizon, identifying leaders involves considering the profile of characteristics, attitudes and skills sought in a successful candidate. Amongst these will be a commitment to the mission, however simple or complex that might seem, and the creation of a variety of forces and synergies for the benefit of the common good and the shared project, knowing that not everyone wants to be a leader nor has the gifts to be one. It's worth having a list of qualities such as an open attitude, a non-judgemental mentality, flexibility and a capacity for adaptation, the serene conviction that it is impossible to please everyone ... all this is achieved progressively through the same exercise. The person's attitudes and their capacity to learn are a priority.

Self-knowledge is a basic, indispensable need. Blindness to oneself creates problems. To avoid inbreeding, the task of finding new leaders should not be confined only on those within the established circle. The circle needs widening. This allows greater innovation. Predisposition is important. It can be built on with good preparation and specific training.

Accompaniment requires an essential precondition: trust. The appointment must be the fruit of this personal trust which does not exclude balanced supervision, understood not as an external control but as a proven means of encouragement. Above all, in its initial phase, exercising leadership requires openness to a gradual process that does not fall into the trap of destructive self-reliance. All parties need to understand their place in the whole and be able to express themselves freely. The sense of fraternity in Marist leadership needs to be compatible with an objective practice of the same. If not, this aspect would distort rather than offer enrichment and add depth.

5. Leadership in Practice

Below, we explore the ‘lights’ which allow leadership to grow and consolidate and the ‘shadows’ which can put not only leadership but the entire Marist project at risk. As in Caravaggio’s paintings, reality is a mixture of light and shadow. Here are some small tips, some simple brushstrokes on the practice of leadership.

a. Lights

The list could be very long but here are four, by way of example, which affect and are rooted within-person of the leader: empowerment, decision-making, generating enthusiasm and facing the time when leadership of a specific ministry comes to an end.

Empowerment is a key element and strengthens the capacity of the person. The leader’s consistency and the trust gained, work in dialogue

for the benefit of the mission, especially in complex situations, unknown problems, moments of tension, risky circumstances and emergencies... Trust is received and given. Without it, relationships deteriorate. Without it, the leader tends to hoard responsibilities, avoid delegation and weaken the collaboration of others. With empowerment, failures and mistakes are better dealt with, there is no problem accepting negotiation, supervision and review processes, flexibility and learning are favoured. Self-confidence, rooted in humility, makes it possible to better assume responsibilities and maintain a clear vision of the objectives, without getting lost in unimportant aspects.

Empowerment is linked to decision-making and the acceptance of its consequences. The 'authority – power' relationship deserves special reflection. In a way, power comes to the leader through the conferred role, but authority must be earned. The task calls for learning and maturity. It is not within the reach of all. Both authority and power are related to influence, although influence can be exerted through other means. One can detect its consequences on the group and on each of its members, whether it has a beneficial rather than coercive effect. Authority is recognised as service. Once again self-knowledge is essential. Decision-making goes back to the leader alone, a situation that should not diminish teamwork. The group should not replace the leader, nor the leader transfer responsibility to the group, ceasing to accept their own. Consultation is not excluded but situated in its right place. Deliberation and balance, as opposed to stress and haste, are essential in urgent, emergency or conflict situations. This avoids becoming anxious and therefore having adequate distance from the problem to avoid being consumed by it.

Of great help also are the ability to generate enthusiasm and to unite a team around a common goal, knowing where it is going. In this, vision is key, especially in the area of mission. It goes beyond the immediate and opens new perspectives and alternative thinking. Through enthusiasm, this includes the emotional aspects. The one in charge can

guide in moments of conflict, correct where necessary, strengthen a process in evolution and fulfill oversight tasks.

A good leader takes on this ministry but when finished, knows how to leave and provides an excellent handover to whomever might follow. Ending the role of leadership needs preparation, even when it is the result of one's own initiative. As Ecclesiastes says, "there is a time for everything that is done under heaven" (3,1). There are training courses for this. Lessons learned, relationships established, a global vision, an attitude of service, the ability to contribute discretely from a wealth of experience for the benefit of the common good – all these become part of their personal baggage ...

b. Shadows

In the chiaroscuro of life, shadows have a peculiar relationship with light. Knowing how to interpret them opens up magnificent possibilities for personal work and avoids problematic situations. Some realities are more difficult to observe because they are in a blind spot. Three are highlighted here: ego strength, toxic relationships, and the risk of procrastination.

The greatest difficulty for a leader is that he or she is not necessarily aware of falling into certain shadow areas, such as the desire for prominence, dependence on one's image, the search for success, inner insecurity, ignorance of one's limits, the desire to please everyone, the flight from conflict, ... The results could be dramatic. The ego, even more so if it is bloated, makes it difficult for the person to become aware of the attitudes they are living, to become capable of reading where they are at and to see how they act, how they present themselves, how they decide, how they treat others, how they generate submission or rebellion ...

Relationships become toxic and become fertile ground for manipulation, dependency, or attachment. Respect and empathy are replaced by fear, responsibility by a game of interests. A sense of

community and mission is lost. One falls into the risk of flight and of favouring one line while ignoring others. When this happens, preventive measures (more complex to establish) and corrective measures (more difficult to apply) are required.

A passive leadership, without proactive attitudes, tends to postpone, defer or put off intervention until later. What is not solved continues to be a problem and sometimes rots or becomes chronic. In that case, no intervention will ever arrive on time. The price to be paid is very high.

The leader who is a victim of his shadows, when she or he is finished, takes refuge in accumulated honours, in services rendered or in residual privileges. A significant phrase: “Once I was almost everything and now I am almost nothing.” Such a leader longs for the onions of Egypt and sinks into nostalgia that anything from the past was better. Connection with the present is lost.

6. Learnings From Lived Experience

The experience that we present below had its beginning in Catalonia and its consequences continue to this day. After giving a brief introduction, we will identify the difficulties, learnings and areas to improve.

a. Introduction to the Experience

One of the most intense periods that we have experienced was the crisis caused by cases of sexual abuse of minors. Pedophilia clashes head-on with the Marist mission. At the beginning of 2016, a series of accusations caused a media storm involving public institutions of such proportions that it was called the “Marist case.” Accusations of abuse, cover-up, criminal organization... shook the entire Marist community. Some of the circumstances went back to the middle of the last century. We had to face some events that occurred, in most cases, outside the timeframe of our actions and knowledge.

Without delay, we had to face a wide range of persons and groups: the victims, the media, the students, the families, the teaching staff, the brothers themselves. A change of mentality was unavoidable: moving from an exclusively moral perspective to one of crime. A team of brothers and lay people led, in a coordinated way, the set of responses on behalf of the Marist institution. The question is How to correct this situation while under great pressure and with little room for manoeuvre?

b. Sharing the Result of our Review²

- **Difficulties**

Mechanisms were in place to implement the province policy for the protection of children in the normal course of events, but not to face the novelty of a crisis of great proportions. It was a novelty also for the media, public institutions and society in general. The media presented an avalanche of cases, some real and others without much substance, and came at such an accelerated rate that it was difficult, if not impossible, to control. Victims were the priority but the Marist institution was immersed in a whirlwind of events. From the first moment, the Catalan Commission for the Protection of Children brought in other people and became a crisis cabinet. It quickly sought the help of external advisors: legal services and a communication company whose expertise was crisis management. It was urgent to give answers before having completed the planning and the change of culture. Some of these answers, in the internal sphere, affected siblings, teachers, parents of students and the students themselves – the vast majority being secondary or collateral victims of the problem. Others, in the external sphere, concerned relations with journalists, representatives of public institutions ... Private allegiances to the Marist institution were

² For the preparation of this section, we have had the contribution of three lay people who were part of the crisis management group. They provide a view from the inside but one differentiated from those with ultimate responsibility. Based on individual interviews, the editor has synthesized the content of the responses in the following three points, accepted by the two authors of this contribution.

transformed into public silence for fear of receiving the glare of the spotlight, focussed exclusively on the Marists, despite the broader prevalence of the problem of child abuse. The media “verdict” made an objective understanding of the facts difficult. One journalist titled her article: “When all else fails.” A good diagnosis. The emotional impact was profound due to the awareness of one’s own mistakes; of the external hostility that in some cases seemed to go beyond the facts; due to the attacks on trust, which the families maintained despite everything. Leading the response to a crisis of these proportions requires a team working seamlessly and dedicated to the utmost, an emotional distance so as not to be swallowed up by events, a Marist institution prepared to look the truth in the face without dissimulating, and consideration of the victims as the highest priority.

- **Learnings**

Leadership in such a situation requires teamwork. Those responsible for the province, with the collaboration of lay people, sought a joint response. The crisis, as a multifaceted reality, is viewed from the perspective of each of the team members. Diversity is experienced as enrichment. Trust, freedom, and balance are essential, as is honest and clear internal communication, without twists and turns. Feeling fear is not a problem but bowing to it is. The complex reality of a crisis demands external assistance which serves to expand the team. It is not easy agreeing on solutions when opinions come from different perspectives but, in the end, the decisions are more consistent and credible. The international aspect of the province contributed elements that enriched the perception of the problem and the search for solutions.

Considerable progress has been made in understanding the area of child protection. Necessary, if you do not want to reduce actions to just protecting the institution itself. Therefore, the objective is not to save itself but to protect children and learn to see the reality of what happened from the victim’s perspective. Protection is aimed at defending children’s rights and empowering boys and girls as arbiters of these rights. This change

in mindset is essential for good leadership. Cultural change is slow but sometimes crises accelerate it. Such change needs to be extended to the brothers, to all the staff of the different centres and even to the families themselves. It cannot be taken for granted.

A determination by the institution to face the situation head-on and thoroughly is essential and gives the team security. The involvement by leadership at the various levels of the province can be counted on. Growth comes when all work together.

The importance of educational, social, media networks ... is key. Isolating yourself would be a mistake. A deep crisis is a good opportunity to become aware of your own fragility and turn it into strength.

- **Areas to improve**

To lead through a time of crisis can mean that, once the storm has passed and normal times return, you lower your guard. This would be a mistake. The desire to improve means evaluating the work carried out, intensifying work on the projects in train and setting directions for the future. It is necessary to combine closure of past wounds with a commitment to change mentalities, internal and external, around the protection of children, as well as the transformation of the organization. For this, awareness is essential. There is the underlying conviction that if you have been part of the problem, you must now be part of the solution.

Some ways of improvement: (a) ensure that mechanisms are in place whereby action protocols are applied strictly and swiftly when faced with new cases; (b) deal with time barred cases from an ethical standard; (c) foster the commitment that all those involved in Marist action consider themselves responsible for prevention; (d) promote in-depth cultural change through good training at all levels, including new staff in schools and social works; (e) utilise specialist university centres to provide faculty with postgraduate training in education and the prevention of child sexual

abuse; (f) diversify specific training and empowerment programs aimed at students, families, teachers, siblings, managers, protection teams and those responsible for communication; (g) share learning and practices with other Marist provinces and with other religious or educational entities; (h) join organizations and working groups involved in national and international projects to contribute the accumulated experience and stay abreast of current and evolving ideas; (i) implement certification processes with reputable international institutions such as Keeping Children Safe to guarantee safe spaces where the rights of children and young people are respected; (j) ensure a transfer of learning from current protection and crisis teams to any new bodies that will lead different educational works in the future; (k) make use of social networks to promote values and practices at the service of children's rights and prevention of abuse; and finally, (l) provide leaders, at whatever their level of action, with an open, profound and committed vision in this cause for the benefit of children.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A. For reflection as a Marist institution

The preceding reflection could be summarised in three key ideas. In exercising leadership, we are called to:

- a. prioritise people through listening, trust and empowerment.
- b. opt for shared and teamwork, brothers and lay people together, integrating diverse views and sensitivities to advance the common project, and prioritising human relations and networking.
- c. place ourselves at the service of the mission – evangelising and prophetic – guided by our charism within an intercultural and international context.

B. For personal reflection or group sharing

- a. From all that is here in this chapter, what stands out the most, and which ideas do you think can best help you in your practice of leadership?
- b. If people are a priority, then so is the leader. From this perspective how important is self-knowledge? Which of your personal characteristics favour the exercise of leadership and which constitute an obstacle?
- c. In my practice of leadership, what elements do I find most help or hinder the empowerment of others?
- d. How do others experience your leadership? Do you create dependency, empower, create turmoil around you, generate team spirit ...?
- e. What contributions from this chapter would have helped you deal more successfully with problematic situations that you have experienced?
- f. How do you accompany the people around you at work, in ministry or in day-to-day life? Do you help them grow as people and as leaders? What has been your experience of being accompanied and of accompanying in your ministry, in particular life situations or in moments of crisis and difficulty?

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Keeping Children Safe: <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/>

CHAPTER 12



“How Many Loaves do You Have?”

Br. Hipólito Pérez
Provincial of Central America

Servant and Prophetic Leadership that builds Community, starting from the Story of the Multiplication of the Loaves (Mk. 8, 1-10)¹

I received the invitation to ponder on the experience of Marist leadership from a few perspectives: **service, prophetic and community**. After some time spent pondering on this idea within myself, the story of the multiplication of the loaves (Mk. 8) emerged strongly in me as a metaphor for it. The idea is fundamentally inspired by the Gospel, which we Marists wish to put into practice in this 21st century.

This Gospel passage, in its various versions, is intended to be **evocative** and to **provoke** a reaction. It can strike us profoundly when we consider it alongside one of the calls made to us by the XXII General Chapter (2017): “**Favours prophetic servant leadership and closely accompanies Marist life and mission**”.

Some keys to reading this passage (Mk. 8, 1-10) (cfr. Castillo, 2021)

The multiplication of the loaves is the event in the life of Jesus that is retold the greatest number of times. We have six references (Mk. 6, 30-44; Mt. 14, 15-23; Lk. 9, 12-17; Jn. 6, 1-15; Mk. 8, 1-10; Mt. 15, 32-39). In the passages cited, there is a first multiplication of loaves that all four gospels relate and a second event that is related only in Matthew and Mark.

This story must have made a great impression on the first Christian communities. It reminds us of two of the things that most concern all human beings (health and food) and **these marked the principal activity of Jesus**.

Another important aspect that we discover in these stories is the reaction of Jesus when contemplating the people: **“His entrails were moved”** (in Greek: *splagnisthe²*), which implies “inner visceral emotion”, as in several other passages of the Gospel. Jesus welcomes, understands, accepts ... everyone, whatever they are and however they live. **His humanity is unique and through it we encounter God.**

Consider in the “multiplication of loaves” these attitudes: sharing, participation, fraternity, horizontality, sense of community, ... It reminds us of that unity and humanity, which distinguished the first Christian communities - *“one heart and one spirit”* - (Acts 2:42). It reminds us too of the experience of our Marist origins of Father Champagnat and the first community of brothers. Both have their origin and foundation in Jesus and his Gospel, present in these attitudes, and not in honor or power. Thus, our course is set in regard to our **style of being, living, and carrying out our mission.**

The “Seven Loaves” of Servant, Prophetic and Community-centered Leadership

This passage shows us some significant elements that we wish to incorporate into Marist leadership. The symbol of the **“seven loaves”** will accompany us in this reflection, as we convert each loaf into a fundamental attitude, which needs to be put into effect in the performance of our service, following the style of the Master from Nazareth.

Jesus asks the disciples to respond to the needs of the people and to get involved. They are surprised and the question arises: How many loaves do you have? They answered that there were seven, and began to distribute them among all the people. In this action, an abundance is revealed.

Seven loaves, seven existential attitudes, which become a source of life, a transforming dynamism in the performance of our leadership.

The Bread of Empathy

“Arise to enter life with me, brother,
and give me your hand from the depth
of your widespread pain” (Neruda).
“They have been with me for three days
and they have nothing to eat”. (Mk 8, 2)

During my novitiate, I read Ignacio Larrañaga’s book: “Sube conmigo”. In the opening pages, this verse by the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, appeared. Its depth and insights have remained in my memory, becoming a daily challenge and invitation.

Jesus, in the story of the multiplication, connects with and tunes very deeply into the need of the other. He intuits it and perceives it, and this produces an interior movement to which he promptly tries to respond. Jesus is an empathic person.

Empathy (Díaz de Rada, 2012) is the ability to understand the emotional issues of other people. It is putting yourself in the place of the other. It requires intracultural, intercultural and transcultural sensitivity. Empathy is more than a communicative technique, it is a philosophy of life. Empathy is service. Empathy is the “other”, it is the “arise to enter life with me ...”

It implies, in how we act, that we connect with the gaze, the truth, the perception, the feelings of the other. It means entering, barefoot, without prejudice, into the history and the mystery of the other. This profound communion becomes a sacred space for the conversion of the one who accompanies and the one who is accompanied.

The leadership that assumes the evangelical principle of simplicity is capable of dialogue, really putting itself in the place of the other person;

only those who make the Word the motive force of their existence can manage to offer ways, both new and old, just like those of Jesus. Only those who understand service in this way are capable of stopping, spending time with others and converting them at the heart of their existence, actively listening to each one, in their uniqueness and originality (Revista Vida Religiosa, 2013).

From Below, the Bread of Fragility ...

What can we do with seven loaves? It is not much for so many people (Mk 8, 5)

Together with empathy, **vulnerability** arises, as a necessary attitude in this exercise of leadership. We contemplate, in the story of the multiplication of the loaves, the attitude of the disciples in the face of an emerging situation of need: the people have nothing to eat. These same questions arise in the reality of our situations of leadership.

Let us look out from a situation of fragility, need, and littleness; mine, yours, ours, as an individual, group or institution. From the experience of emptying, from below, the possibility of finding ways and answers can arise. The human being is vulnerable (Torralba Roselló, 2010). This vulnerability, inherent in the human condition, can be assumed and appropriated in a conscious way. Karl Jaspers (1989) expresses it in these terms: “Of all living things, human beings are the only ones who know their own finiteness” (p. 59).

In the words of Francesc Torralba: the self-awareness of vulnerability, both personal and as a group, radically transforms the life of the individual and of institutions. It is one thing to live without having internalized vulnerability and another to live constantly assuming the changeable character of one’s own existence. When we become aware of personal and institutional vulnerability, we cannot live as if everything remained the

same, as if all the securities that sustain our lives were untouched by this experience. This is how the apostle Paul expresses and confirms it from his own personal experience, when he says: “*When I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10).

This route is the one shown and proposed by Jesus,

having loved his own, he loved them to the end ... He got up from the table and began to wash their feet ... When he had washed their feet, he put on his cloak, leaned back and said: I have given you an example for you to do the same as I have done for you. (Jn. 13, 1-15)

The service of accompanying and leading requires this mystical approach, this option and this passion, “to the end and from below”, with the consciousness of being insignificant. The hymn in Phil. 2, 7 says something shocking: God “emptied himself of himself, and took the condition of a slave, becoming one of many.”

Ubuntu: The Bread of Communion

“He took the seven loaves, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to give out. They served them to the people...” (Mk. 8, 6)

In this passage we recognize the value of the whole, of the collective, of the community, of participation, communion and the involvement of each one. This attitude of the “whole” evokes the concept of “**Ubuntu**” (Pérez Porto, et al., 2010). This is an ethical rule from South Africa which is focused on the loyalty of people and the relationships between them. The word comes from the Zulu and Xhosa languages. Ubuntu is seen as a traditional African concept, whose meaning reflects “**humanity towards others**” or “**I am because we are**”. It is the human capacity³ to understand, accept, and treat others well, being similar to the commandments of God to love others as oneself.

Nelson Mandela balanced his philosophy of life and his style of government in the expression: “Ubuntu does not mean that people should cease to look after themselves, but the question is, are they going to do something that allows the community to improve” (Diario de Ibiza, 2021). This wisdom and style of life throw light on the dynamics of our ways of relating, marked as they are by simplicity wherever, as Marists, we wish to be artisans of fraternity.

Kneaded Bread with Innards of Mercy

“He called the disciples and said to them: I have compassion on these people ...” (Mk 8,2)

One of its deepest dimensions that the Gospels pick up with some insistence in relation to Jesus of Nazareth is his ability “to be moved.”

In a Eucharistic prayer that we frequently hear in our celebrations of the breaking of bread, we find described the implication for our lives to live mercy in an integral way: in our gestures, our words and actions.

Give us hearts of mercy in the face of all human misery. Inspire us to make the right gesture and speak the appropriate word faced with the lonely and helpless brother. Help us to be available to those who feel exploited and depressed. May we care enough to share in love, the anguish, and sadness, the joys and hopes of all human beings. (Catholic Church, 2016, Eucharistic Prayer, Vb and Vc.)

Like Jesus, in our serving, we are invited to live as compassionate leaders. Compassion is born when we discover at the center of our existence not only that God is God and the person is a person, but also that the one who lives next to us is really our neighbor. For leaders, who are filled with a sense of compassion, nothing human is alien to them: neither joy nor sorrow, no form of life or death (Nouwen, 2014).

Our society, the Church, our institutions, all seek a new form of authority, and question us about its nature. The best characteristic that encompasses it is compassion. This must become the center, and includes the very nature of authority. For future generations, the Christian leader is primarily a servant of God, but to exercise authentic leadership the individual must be able to make visible, and credible in the modern world, God's compassion for every person, as manifested in Jesus (Nouwen, 2014).

This option makes the person the center and the priority. Structures are important, but they can never be put above the person. In our fraternal meetings, people always need to occupy the first place and be treated with mercy.

Bread baked in Listening, Silence and the Inner Gaze.

“He took the five loaves and the two fish, and raised his eyes to heaven...” (Lk. 9, 16)

In Luke's version of the story, which is not told with the same intensity as in Mark, he expresses an interior attitude of Jesus, which is deep and full of feeling, when setting forth his actions. He “looked up.” These words condense the transcendent, contemplative, deep and rooted dimension that the Master lived when carrying out his mission.

This inner attitude connects perfectly with what Pablo d'Ors expresses and recommends in his interview: “Silence is the most transformative thing I know”, stating:

Cultivating silence is essential, and it is the most transformative thing I know. If our service were inhabited by spaces of silence, what would emanate from them would be much more authentic and genuine. I am not suggesting that we mythologize silence, but

experience it and verify that it has enormous power. (D'Ors, 2015, Sept. 7).

The Bread of Horizontality that Builds Bridges...

“He directed the people to sit down on the ground” (Mk 8, 6)

We are invited to create real family homes, generating authentic relationships that allow us to **build bridges** between ourselves and with the people with whom we are in contact (XXII General Chapter, 2017).

Network leadership is something urgent and is a simmetrical service, carried out, in collaboration, helping people to give the best of themselves, to live and grow in all areas of life. Perceiving people in a symmetrical relationship, in equality, offers them the possibility of being: singular, unique, unrepeatable, reflective and authentic.

Working in a network implies generating a common vision, as well as providing a framework of values and beliefs that integrate and bring together different tendencies and feelings. It means promoting a creative environment in which people can project the best of themselves, seek improvement and continuous learning (Revista Vida Religiosa, 2012, October 9 and 11).

Bread of Gratitude, Care and Testimony, Distributed by the Handful.

“He took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to hand out. They served them to the people. They also had a few small fish. He blessed them and commanded that they be handed out” (Mk 8, 6-7).

Along with the image of being bridge builders, the XXII General Chapter of the Marist Brothers challenges us with another image, that is to be beacons of hope (XXII General Chapter, 2017).

As we accompany people and institutions, this implies that we try to walk beside them, bringing light and hope. These are challenging times, with the need for visionary leadership that guides towards life. It must never lead to fear or contention.

The leader in these times knows that the ministry to which he has to respond is in the heart of each person. It lies in the fears and dreams of each one. In the present and the future. In tears and in joy. It lies in missionary projects and in internal struggles... The leader is breathing in this truth in order to guide the mission of the family or institution towards what is possible and to what is creative. The leader is directing the mission towards communion. The leader today moves towards freedom and responsibility. May these leaders know how to instil in others that freedom of spirit is only achieved by a conscience that is awake.

This vision of leadership implies gratuity in two directions. It is an opportunity to serve in a spirit of faith while making it possible to explore the mystery of the other. Developing the awareness that everything is grace, gift and opportunity, without avoiding the reality of conflict in this task, takes us on a positive road that brings peace and new life.

Together with the sense of gratuity, emerges the awareness that leaders need to **care for themselves** in order to be efficient and transparent, and to be able to empower people with a sense of responsibility in a situation of comprehensive personal care that supports a dignified and full life.

It is appropriate to include in this section the witnessing dimension of leadership. We must overcome an archaic, voluntaristic and perfectionist vision of this dimension. The author, José María Castillo, addresses this issue with clarity and is focused on coming to real conviction. The word needs

to be translated into firmly held beliefs, which change habits of conduct as well as structures. These beliefs determine our behavior and organize our habits and choices because the true convictions of people are manifest in what they do (How do they live? What do they do? How do they do it ...?). The true inner convictions of people do not reside in what they say (Castillo, 2021).

A leadership that multiplies ...

People are needed to promote the mission and the community, with skill and the dedication of their own lives. **Gospel leadership, which is necessary and urgent in these complex, disconcerting and challenging times of pandemic and the new normal**, does not have answers for everything but is capable of evoking the freedom and responsibility of each one.

We reject a **factotum leadership** that acts, speaks, and stands as a spokesperson for everyone, limiting the harmonious growth of communities and individuals, presenting the unreal feeling of a “single chord polyphony.” We also reject those who are only concerned with **conservation and remembrance**, because they will try to justify their actions or lack of action, by pressure from their surroundings or because of fear of a world that they are afraid of more than they love.

More than a leadership of good and exact management, on many occasions covering a lack of spirituality, what is necessary is to promote a style of leadership that goes along more risky, prophetic and visionary lines.

The leadership that we intuitively seek for Marist life in the 21st century is Gospel inspired (prophetic, servant and community-focused), challenged to drink from the source and fix our eyes on the **Master from Nazareth**, on his attitudes and wisdom, making these a touchstone for our service: **“To love to the end”**, expressed at the Last Supper (giving of

himself, breaking and sharing himself) and the washing of the feet (from below, wearing an apron and in an attitude of “annihilation”).

As Marists, we feel impelled to contemplate the life of **Marcellin Champagnat and the first Marist community**. From them too we learn the art of “going out of our way in order to serve”. The Rule of Life, in number 55, gathers together this beautiful testimony from our Marist tradition.

The community of first Brothers was a family. Marcellin often said to its members: “You know that I live only for you, that every day I ask God to give you everything that is genuinely good for you, and that I would give you anything, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifices.” Letter to Brother Denis, Janvier 5 1838.

May this leadership, kneaded and multiplied by the bread of **empathy, fragility, communion, mercy, interior listening, horizontality, a seeking of nothing in return** generate “life and life in abundance”, in this new beginning for Marist life and mission.

I encourage our prophetic, servant and community oriented leadership, through the martyrdom of our dear Brother Moisés Cisneros as the “Passover Pilgrim”.

To follow Jesus is to embody his own death in our lives, in order to be able to participate in his Resurrection. Without a doubt, our brother appropriates these words from a liturgical hymn: If Christ was my food, let me be bread and wine in the winepress and the mill where my life is torn from me (Otero, S., 2008).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

After having read and pondered on these words on Marist leadership starting with a reading of the passage about the multiplication...

1. With what attitude or attitudes in the foregoing can you most identify? Why? Connect this with some personal experience which you have lived through or are living through.
2. Do you consider the community aspect to be important in the living out of Marist leadership? Why?
3. How is this community-focused leadership lived within you own Marist mission? Are you able to share some examples?
4. What challenges do you see in your own Marist life in regard to this idea of how leadership should be understood as having a community focus?

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Notes

- 1 Author's note: There follows a synthesis of the exegesis of the story, as told in the Gospel of Mark, 8, 1-10.
- 2 José María Castillo (2021) uses this expression in his book, *La Religión de Jesús: Comentario al Evangelio diario*, February 13, Saturday of the 5th week of Ordinary time.
- 3 Religión y Espiritualidad. Significado de Ubuntu. Medio. <https://www.significados.com/ubuntu>

PART III

SKILLS

CHAPTER 13



Communication Skills in Servant and Prophetic Leadership

Br. Cyprian Gandebo
Provincial of West Africa

Involving people in group activities to achieve objectives is increasingly becoming the order of the day. Encouraging collaboration or involving people to perform a task requires skills in communication. To build robust Marist communities requires effective communication skills which are indispensable for enhanced coordination and teamwork. A failure to communicate in Marist community is a failure to live up to the Christian mandate of being ‘one heart and one mind’ (Spiritual Testament).

It can be said without doubt that communication is a big challenge in religious communities. Even in society today, poor communication or the lack of it is the common cause of strife in families and workplaces. No wonder then this theme came up very strongly during the 22nd General Chapter in Medellin – Colombia, in 2017. The Strategic Plan of the General Council then makes efforts to develop a “communication plan that transmits who we are and reach out effectively to our various stakeholders and the wider public” (Marists of Champagnat, 2017 - 2025). The project aims to nurture a sense of belonging, overcome geographical and existential borders, and project Marist life and mission to the larger society using plain and effective communication skills to build authentic Marist communities.

The founder, St. Marcellin Champagnat and the first Brothers as well as Superiors General, spoke and wrote circulars to inspire Provincials and Community Leaders aimed at improving Marist life and mission in the Provinces and Communities. At the foundation of any authentic Marist community is communication for when we talk to people with love, we speak from the heart. This connection builds trust and rapport which in turn generates human interactions. Efficient communication breeds forgiveness and reconciliation among community members. This notion is the central thought of St Marcellin’s Spiritual Testament:

Dear Brothers, I beg of you with all the love of my heart, and by all the love you bear me, keep ever alive among you the charity of Christ. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of

one heart and one mind. Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians: *'See how they love one another!'* That is the desire of my heart and my burning wish, at this last moment of my life. Yes, my dearest Brothers, hear these last words of your Fa-ther, which are those of our Blessed Saviour: *'Love one another!'*

St Marcellin Champagnat knew quite well how to communicate to his listeners. Brother Sean Sammon's "marvellous companions", underlines concrete concerns of Marist communities and proposes communication as a tool for comfortably addressing them. Ernesto Sanchez's circular, "Homes of Light – Caring for Life and Generating New Life", highlights more clearly communication as a remedy for building authentic Marist Communities.

The discourse on communication has extensively permeated leadership and management courses as well as human relationships. This is so because communication is a central theme and has a massive impact on leadership. Today, it is widely discussed as human interactions increase and become more complex. The continual existence of human institutions hinges on their ability to communicate with each other. As a consequence, human be-ings require certain communication skills to enhance effective interactions.

The available literature on this topic indicates a positive relationship between communication and leadership. There is sufficient evidence demonstrating that outstanding communication skills are fundamental for effective leadership and for attainment of institutional goals (Zulch, 2014). Thus, good communication leads to effective leadership. This is because good communication inspires and motivates followers to work harder to achieve institutional goals. Leaders who are unable to communicate properly cannot be effective leaders. As Luthra and Dahiya, (2015) assert, 'good communication skills help to develop better understanding and

beliefs among people, inspires them to follow principles and values which their leader wants to inculcate in them' (p. 43).

Communication, thus, is an integral part of successful institutions. Hence, there can be no meaningful institutional life without the effective interaction of its members. It is indeed a vital ingredient for leadership. As the 'life-wire of organizational life' (Gandeebo, 2017) there can be no meaningful relationship without communication. Indeed, it is the superglue that binds institutional members together. It would be impossible for an organization to function without a proper system of communication.

Since we create reality through the sharing of experiences and perceptions of the universe and phenomena, communication helps in the 'creation, initiation and exchange of meaning' (Guffey, Rhodes, & Rogin, 2010). When we communicate, we aim to transmit meaning from one person or group of persons to another by means of mutual symbols. Such encounters build relationships, communion and fraternity (Pope Francis) and transform people. One of the basic ingredients for effective communication is trust. Abraham Lincoln, former American president, asserts that "if you want to win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are a sincere friend". Trust is a foundation and a building block for a realistic relationship and provokes authentic or meaningful communication.

Throughout the centuries, human beings have always articulated their thoughts, feelings and understanding of the universe through communication. As Owen (2011) captured there is a fundamental, powerful and universal desire in all humans to interact with each other. Human beings have a deep-seated need to communicate, and the greater their ability in this regard the more satisfying and rewarding their lives. The title of a book by Pope Francis, "Diverse and United. I communicate, therefore I am" cited by Wells (2020) supposes that there is an inherent desire in human beings to interact. Hence, wherever human beings exist, communication also exists.

Citing Pope Francis, Gomes (2019) intimated that Communication is only effective when we are in communion with each other. Communication, thus, makes sense when it arouses participation and sharing. It must provoke our thoughts and feelings for an interchange of information. A message, initiated and transmitted using the appropriate medium, received and understood must arouse or bring about a change in behaviour or attitudes. The message transmitted by servant and prophetic leaders must stimulate, motivate and ginger into action whoever receives the message. Marist Religious formation given, received and internalized must, thus, express and exhibit some internal as well as external fruitfulness. Gomes (2019), again, notes that “a community is stronger if it is cohesive and supportive”. Servant leaders are, thus, called to witness communion which is a mark of our Christian and Marist identity. It is in this light that Ernesto Sanchez (SG) encouraged all Marists of Champagnat to form or build homes that are a light on the hill for those around, giving ourselves whole heartedly to creating a family-style of life that is open to all (Sánchez, 2020).

The Communication Process

The communication process is comprised of many stages and involves a sender, a message, a medium and a recipient or beneficiary. The process of communication originates with a sender who initiates an idea, encodes and transmits that thought through a medium to a recipient who receives the message, decodes it, interprets it and acts on it. The beneficiary then gives a feedback on the information received. Hence, there are roughly six steps in a communication process: message formulation, message encoding, transmission of message, message decoding, message interpretation and feedback of the message received. The central objective of communication is the transmission of meaning. Communication, therefore, achieves its purpose when the recipient understands the message as conceived by the sender. In other words, communication is effective or successful when the message is understood by the recipient as intended by the sender (Worth, 2004).

Occasionally, however, this communication process may be interrupted or interfered. For instance, the message or intentions of the sender may be misunderstood. Interference and disruption in a communication process can be called noise and may be caused by inattention, drowsiness, fear and judging. These have the potential to inhibit effective comprehension of information interchange. Similarly, moving cars or vehicles, loud music, communicator manners may inhibit the communication process. These factors, together or individually, may cause ineffective communication. For instance, a drowsy accompanitor or a blurring preacher may cause ineffective communication during accompaniment. Hence, servant and prophetic leaders must use appropriate communication skills to overcome noise and enhance understanding in information interchange.

Effective Communication Skills

Communication skills are tools that are used to enhance communication. Communication skills are our ability to give and receive or comprehend different information. These skills consist of speaking, listening, empathizing, motivating, inspiring, respecting the opinions of others, as well as understanding and sharing in the emotions of others. Communication is only effective when the information received is understood and if that information stimulates a change or brings newness in the behaviour of the recipient. The use of appropriate communication skills leads to and enhances effective transmission and exchange of information.

Listening is an essential communication skill. Although many leaders spent most of their time communicating, listening is often overlooked (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Listening is not a passive activity but involves paying attention to what the other person is expressing in order to understand. As Worth (2004) intimates, leaders who fail to listen, fail to communicate. It enjoins on servant leaders to listen with attention in order to understand and to build rapport with people with whom they communicate. This emotional bonding makes people feel valued because

they are listened to and feel appreciated because they feel their opinions count. This sense of being valued breeds satisfaction and joy.

Building rapport is a skill that promotes immediate and joyful sharing between the one who communicates, and the one who listens. Rapport is identical with trust which is an indispensable ingredient in Marist religious accompaniment. With adequate rapport, formatees feel secured as they are assured of trust and confidentiality. With such ambience, they freely and instantly share of themselves. A lack of rapport and trust, on the contrary, hinders or inhibits the formation process as formatees may feel insecure and reluctant to open up for formation to take place. A tranquil ambience is a 'privileged means for building community and for stimulating the human and spiritual growth of each of us. It provides us the opportunity to share the best of ourselves with our brothers in the community' (Institute of the Marist Brothers, 2020). Such backgrounds provide the right medium to open-mindedly express oneself with no biases or prejudices but with a commitment to understanding the opinions of other group members. Effective accompaniment thus takes place when there is attentive and empathetic listening. Communication requires availability, honesty, patience, tolerance, and mutuality, etc. (Sánchez, 2020).

Principles of Effective Communication

Communication may be shaped by past experiences, prejudices, emotions, language, etc. Likewise, context and culture are important elements that impact on communication. The context and culture in which communication takes place are fundamental to understanding meanings of the content of a message and its feedback. Often times, Brothers may not get along very well in community because their playing fields are divergent. For instance, if the language of communication does not provide the same meaning for both sender and recipient, the message sent out may be distorted, misunderstood or misinterpreted. Thus, servant leaders make efforts to avoid long-winding phrases, abstract concepts, unfamiliar

words and signs when they communicate. Servant leaders should not avoid ambiguous words and colloquial expressions. Rather, servant leaders make use of simple and unambiguous words in communicating. Effective communication flourishes very well on simple and unsophisticated words. The servant leader is clear and unambiguous when communicating because his aim is to bring understanding and feedback from listeners.

Thus, the ability to clearly articulate ideas and vision is a characteristic of servant leaders. Servant leaders aim to help others to accomplish their potential. They are generally other-centred and espouse a two-way communication to enter into dialogue with the other. In this way, the leader and the follower share responsibility for the transmission and understanding of the message. The two parties then become co-responsible for the transmission and understanding of the message. As servant leaders, the objective should be to nurture and empower young Brothers, students and staff to mature into prospective servant and prophetic leaders. Servant leaders enable followers to benefit from or understand what is being communicated. Followers are empowered to grow into their potential or what they are capable of becoming.

Similar to verbosity and context, prejudice and intergenerational differences are sources of interferences in communication. They impact significantly and can distort the communication process. It is evident in religious communities that intergenerational differences impact the quality of communication. Younger generations feel that the quality of formation received today is much better than those of the past. The older generation, in contrast, feel formation received today is watered-down and today's religious are half-baked. Ideas such as these cause rift and inhibit communication and polarize communities into cliques.

Giving too much information content or dumping of content on the audience or recipients hinders effective communication. Since 'it is not all who call me Lord, Lord that will enter the kingdom of God' (Mt 7:21), so it is not everybody who transmits information that is a communicator.

Effective communicators address the needs of the audience and not their personal needs. Dumping of irrelevant content that has no impact on the recipients may create boredom. Servant leaders create spaces for a two-way interaction. This dialogue or reciprocal interaction invites participation of the audience which is an excellent recipe for effective communication.

Barriers to Communication Process

Apart from the noise that inhibits or impedes effective communication, there are other factors that pose as obstacles to effective communication. To communicate effectively the servant and prophetic leader must learn to deal with the barriers of communication.

Failing to plan is planning to fail, says the adage. Many leaders fail to communicate effectively with their followers due largely to ineffective planning on what they wish to transmit or communicate. An effective communication system requires painstaking planning. The good communicator is unambiguous of the objective of what he communicates. He is also aware and considers other alternatives and then selects the best alternative message and its mode of transmission to achieve maximum results. When such significant considerations are neglected, there is a possibility of failure to make the desired impression and the inability to elicit the intended response.

Sometimes when there is a lacuna in the communication process due to differences in the way people perceive and interpret phenomena, this may create misinterpretation, misunderstanding and confusion. Organizational miscommunication or hindrances may occur due to differences in education, training, social status, age, sex, economic, cultural backgrounds, or stereotyping. The vigilant servant and prophetic leader will seek to bridge any generational gaps using appropriate strategies.

In some organizations, communication problems are caused by an inability of one person to understand the language or linguistic expressions

of another. The inability to comprehend what one person expresses indicates that the communicator has used an unfamiliar ascent, words, expressions, or statements. Like differences in perceptions, ambiguous words and semantic blocks lead to vagueness and misunderstanding in the intended message. This renders the communication meaningless if it does not bring about understanding and feed-back. A semantic block, commonly, results from the usage of improper vocabulary. Hence, servant leaders would endeavour to articulate the language that is unequivocally understood by everybody and/or speak slowly.

Organizations are structured as ‘flat’ or ‘tall’. So organizational block derives from how the organization is structured. Flat organizations are usually democratic and participative whilst tall organizations are primarily centralized and hierarchical. The levels an information passes through to arrive at its destination generally affect the accuracy of the information. Distortion of information is evident in “taller” organizations than in “flat” ones. Information easily filters through and, many times, gets lost in a taller organization than in a flatter one. Hence, servant leaders must ensure to avert information distortion. Information distortion can significantly be reduced in decentralized structures than in hierarchical ones.

Interpersonal factors such as trustworthiness among organizational members, rapport, tone, and sensitivity of the emotional content of the message affect communication effectiveness. Where leaders walk-the-talk or practice what they say, they are often trusted and listened to while those who just bubble words are not generally trusted or not listened to. Equally, poor rapport between leaders and followers creates communication mishaps and challenges.

Sometimes leaders fail to communicate effectively because of information overload or too much information calling for their attention. A typical day for most of our leaders is exhibited by phone calls, writing memos or reports, discussions with diverse people on various topics, and giving verbal instructions. Where such information processing is not well

coordinated, it will always lead to poor management of the communication process.

The overall objective of listening is to fully comprehend what is being communicated. Unfortunately, most of the time, many people do not fully understand what is articulated due partly to selective or poor listening. Selective listening is a technique used when we select to hear what we want to hear or see what we want to see. In other words, a person purposely blocks out another's ideas or opinions just because the ideas do not match up with the expected. This technique is called mental filtering, in which someone chooses to listen to or is attentive to only aspects of a message being given. Hence, effective communication may be inhibited owing to selective or poor listening skills. Selective listening or poor listening may be caused by a lack of concentration, inattentiveness or some other events interfering in the listening process. This kind of situation most frequently leads to information loss or forgetfulness.

The medium or channel of transmission of the message can also be a hinderance or barrier for effective communication. So, servant and prophetic leaders must make use of the most appropriate means to convey or transmit the desired information so that the message can be properly received, interpreted, and understood. The worth and credibility of the message can enhance or become barriers to effective communication. Similarly, filtering, manipulation and distortion of the message are factors that can hinder the communication process.

The responsibility to strengthen and improve communication in organizations is for both the individual and the organization. On the one hand, senders should endeavour to define and articulate the purpose of their message, construct each message with the recipient in mind, select the best channel to communicate it, time each transmission thoughtfully, and seek feedback. Receivers, on their part, must listen attentively, be sensitive to the sender, recommend a suitable medium for messages, and initiate feedback efforts.

The ability to communicate well, verbally and written, is an indispensable skill for prophetic and servant leadership. Through communication, people exchange information, which helps to influence one another's attitudes, behaviours, and understandings. Communication allows leaders to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, listen to one another, and gain needed information to create an inspirational community. No leader can handle conflict, negotiate, and succeed at effective leadership without being a good communicator.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIONS

1. To what extent do I communicate with everyone in my community?
2. Am I sensitive to the diverse members of my community when I communicate?
3. What are the greatest challenges I face in building Marist community?
4. How can I assess the effectiveness of communication in my community?
5. What are the barriers to effective communication in Marist communities?
6. How do I build good interpersonal relationships in my community or workplace?
7. What strategic methodologies are practicable today for prophetic leadership in building Marist communities?

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CHAPTER 14



Decision-Making Competency

Br. Robert Teoh
Provincial of East Asia
(2013-2019)

Introduction

After completion of restructuring, our Institute has embarked on studying and researching for a simple but universally applicable governmental structure that will carry the institute forward in the new century. With the help of a group of professional consultants, engaging all Administrative Units, spent more than 4 years in discussion and planning, the General Administration has finally come up with a simple but realistic structure that could propel the whole Institute to move forward to continue the vision and mission of our Founder in the new era.

The XXII General Chapter (2017) complements this effort by asking the new administration to assume “a prophetic and servant leadership which closely accompanies Marist life and mission.” To this end, it suggests “identifying and forming leaders, lay and brother, at all levels of the Institute, in view of **growth in co-responsibility...**” and to ensure that “all levels of government, structures are put in place and / or strengthened where all Marists shared leadership and responsibility for Marist life and mission.”

This shift from a centralised, top-down governance style to that of shared leadership and responsibility surely require a paradigm shift from all levels, to adopt servant and prophetic leadership approach as a new way of doing things, particularly in making decision. Servant-leadership incorporates the ideals of empowerment, total quality, team building, participatory management, and the service ethic into a leadership philosophy. Research has shown that participatory decision making brings about a high level of satisfaction among employees¹. In the words of the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership (1997, p. 4), this model of leadership emphasizes “increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the **sharing of power in decision making.**”

We should not ignore the importance of the prophetic dimension of whatever decision we, make even though at time the decision may

seem ridiculous and illogical. Sometimes a wrong decision will cause the Institute to miss the window of opportunity to bring about new life. The decision of Marcellin Champagnat to reject the suggestion to amalgamate his Brothers with those founded by the Vicar General, Fr. Bochard, is a good example. No doubt, leaders or groups of people, make decisions based on their beliefs/convictions, core values, distinctive criteria (charism) after balancing through “pros and cons”. The important moment of leaving the decision in the hands of God and praying over it should not be taken lightly; else they may miss the golden chance of making a prophetic decision in life. A servant-leader should develop the instinctive “inner feeling” or “insight” about the will of God so that he/she will not miss the golden opportunity to make any prophetic decision.

Shared Decision-Making through Servant and Prophetic Leadership

One of the important roles of leaders is making decisions. There are many ways and processes that a leader can use to arrive at any decision. Some leaders may prefer to make decision by themselves; others may prefer to involve a small group of people, the Provincial Council, through a consultation or consensus building process. For the purpose of our discussion, we will only focus on major decision-making like opening or closing a religious community, adopting an action plan according to the priorities recommended by the Provincial Chapter or other decisions that will impact the life and mission of an Administration Unit. The day-to-day decision-making such as when to have lunch or where to have a meeting is not in the scope of our discussion.

Our Constitutions (2020), guided by Canon Law, clearly stated how the Provincial and his Council make decisions under various circumstances. However, it does not spell out the process of decision-making. This provides the leaders of an Administrative Unit the opportunity to explore different processes and possibilities to arrive at a decision. Therefore, leaders adopting

the servant and prophetic leadership style can choose to employ a shared decision-making approach in making major decisions in governance.

Shared decision-making is a process that draws on the combined knowledge of many stakeholders to make smarter, more effective decisions. It can deliver multiple benefits because the process brings in perspectives and information that decision-makers might otherwise miss. Health care and education are two fields that often use shared decision-making to improve outcomes for patients and students. Effective servant leadership requires collaboration in decision-making. In a sense, a servant leader must have a strong ability to self-reflect and to nurture a participatory culture within the organization. R. F. Russell wrote in his essay *The role of values in servant leadership in 2001*, “**Leaders enable others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away.**”

What are the Benefits of Shared Decision-Making?

Better engagement. Often, we hear leaders complain about how difficult it is to persuade people to accept new changes that are necessary for an organisation in order to bring about new life. This is probably because the people concerned were not involved in decision-making. There will be better engagement when people know that their input matters and see how it can contribute towards achieving certain goals. When the process of decision making involves them, they can share ideas and this in turn boosts their engagement and, probably the process leads to more innovative ideas on how to arrive at the decisions.

Improve change management. Change initiatives probably fail due to poor communication and lack of buy-in. With shared decision-making, communication is more open and frequent among leaders, front-line people in mission, and other stakeholders. This certainly improves buy-in at all levels. Any doubts and uncertainties can be dealt with immediately.

This improves change management and provides constant checks and balances, fine-tuning the strategy to achieve the intended goal.

Lower the chance of making bad decisions. When a leader makes decisions on his own, with his own limitation, the chances of making a bad decision is greater. Whereas when the process of decision making involves more people, it will bring in more perspectives and information, this will likely lower the risk of making a bad decision.

Better understanding. When a leader makes decisions that will affect the life of another person, it only makes sense if the person involved is listened to and is allowed to participate in the process of decision making. This will bring about a better understanding and acceptance of the decisions. This is particularly important to the pastoral care of the Brothers and laypeople in our ministries. A servant and prophetic leader needs to assume the role of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who is willing to die for his sheep (Jn 10:11) and to bring about abundant life for people under his care (Jn 10:10). This implies that the leader is willing to live close to the people he serves; to be like shepherds living with ‘the smell of the sheep’ (Pope Francis, 2013)². Only then will he be able to listen to the people he served and they in turn listen to him.

How to put Shared Decision-Making into Practice

1. Before you start any conversation with your group of people in the process of shared decision-making, first leave your ego outside the room. Consciously remind yourself that it is not about you who is going to make a decision, but about listening to the wisdom and opinions of the people you have gathered. Probably the Holy Spirit speaks louder through them.
2. **Start small.** Focus on small changes you can make with your immediate circle of people. Trying to make changes that affect people

beyond your sphere of influence is not easy to handle if you are not used to shared decision-making.

3. **Do your homework.** Gather information that you would like to share with your group. Just be aware that finding time to loop people into the decision-making process could be a challenge. And making the discussion too formal can make people uncomfortable. Start asking questions related to the upcoming decision whenever you have a chance. Chating with the team members ahead of a meeting can ease into the process of gathering input informally. When you are always seeking input, people may be more comfortable answering your questions, and they may take the initiative to come to you with their ideas. Visualising the information you have gathered because of a good presentation will leave behind a solid impression during your group meeting.
4. Select the right moment and place to meet and discuss. During this meeting, the leader can ask the opinion of the group. Let the members of group have sufficient time to discuss their thoughts. Actively listen to their perspective and try to empathize with them. A session of brainstorming for a solution may take place after all have expressed their thoughts. The different processes such as See- Judge- Act, discernment of Pros and Cons, SWOT analysis may be employed. Guide your group with challenging questions to sharpen and optimize decisions. Respect the collective decision at the end. If a decision is made collectively, the people involved will be likely to take responsibility for their decision.
5. Pray over the collective decision. Unlike in the business sector, most of our decisions are probably related to the life and mission of our Administrative Unit. It is then appropriate to pray over our decision and entrust it to God through Mary's intercession as our Founder had often done in the past.

Conclusion

The change of structure and the style of governing call for a new way of making decisions. This is a simple attempt to introduce shared decision-making as part of our new way of governing with a servant and prophetic leadership. Servant and prophetic leadership is about breaking the top down structure of power and decision-making. Our Institute should aim towards a more flexible process, where decision-making is shared. A good way of doing it is by promoting innovation and fostering feedback within the Institute. Marist leaders can imitate our Founder, Marcellin Champagnat who, when making a crucial decision, never failed to consult the key Brothers and to listen attentively to them. In a way his decision-making process is not too far from the shared decision-making approach. He also set the example of praying over the collective decisions and entrusting them to our Good Mother.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why sharing power in decision-making is considered a natural outcome of a new governing style for the Marist Institute?
2. What are the benefits of shared decision-making?
3. In my local context, how could I/we put in to practice the process of shared decision-making?
4. Why it is important to place our decision before God and spend time in prayer just as Marcellin Champagnat did when he made a major decision?
5. What are your experiences that can resonate with this phrase “Leaders enable others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away”?

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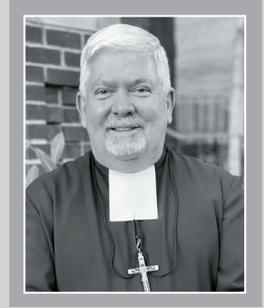
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Notas

1 Global Servant Leadership Roundtable (21 de junio de 2012). La relación entre el liderazgo de servicio y la satisfacción laboral: El papel moderador del proceso de toma de decisiones y la estructura organizativa. Nathan Eva Monash University. En: www.monash.edu.au

2 “El sacerdote que sale poco de sí... se pierde lo mejor de nuestro pueblo, eso que es capaz de activar lo más hondo de su corazón presbiteral ... De aquí proviene precisamente la insatisfacción de algunos, que terminan tristes, sacerdotes tristes, y convertidos en una especie de coleccionistas de antigüedades o bien de novedades, en vez de ser pastores con «olor a oveja». Esto os pido: sed pastores con «olor a oveja». — Papa Francisco: Discurso a los sacerdotes en la Misa Crismal del Jueves Santo, 28 de marzo de 2013.

CHAPTER 15



Collaboration and Team Building

Br. Patrick McNamara
Provincial of the USA
(2015-2021)

As many a sage coach says, “There’s no ‘I’ in team”. But do not be fooled. Even in the best teams, there are lots of I’s, lots of egos.

Team building and collaboration are of course critical to the success of a mission. Collaboration and team building among people with healthy egos and self-confidence can be particularly challenging, but extremely rewarding as well.

I believe there is no greater collaboration than when a group of strong, creative, and independent persons are all committed to the same goal. It is even better when the group’s energy is directed to meeting the needs of others, rather than their own. And when collaborative energy is directed toward doing good, a positive, life bond can also be created that transforms those who give of themselves to the effort. Collaboration is optimized when team building is led by a skillful and experienced servant leader.

In this essay, we look at some concepts that are important to team building such as listening to and empathizing with others, creating a vision, and engaging others in the vision. We will conclude, by looking at challenges such as efforts to collaborate within hierarchical or autocratic leaders and systems.

As a young man, I never saw myself as a ‘team player’. I certainly never saw myself as servant or leader. I never enjoyed working together with other students in group projects. I did not like joining the Boy Scouts or other youth organizations. I did not try out for baseball or basketball teams. Maybe I had some personal disabilities or did not have the physical build for the sport, nor the skills or stamina. In all honesty, I did not have much interest either. Even when I found little jobs, as a paperboy, grass cutter, church sacristan, janitor, I worked alone. Are you sensing a pattern here?

I enjoyed spending time in my own company reading, listening to music, writing fictional news accounts, getting lost in imaginative games or hikes in the woods. These activities were my energy builders, my passions.

So, when did I change?

In many ways, I haven't. But what did change was learning to better value my own gifts and the gifts of others. And eventually coming to realize the joys and accomplishments that collaborating and working with others, could bring.

As I grew older, I came to respect and value the gifts that some others had so much that I wanted to be on their teams, in their company, their community. I discovered the power of collaboration and the inspiration and energy when collaboration supported a mission. Becoming a part of a Marist team working with young people motivated me as a young man to join the Marist Brothers' Community as a consecrated religious Brother—it still does, some 45 years later.

Have you ever been so motivated that a great leader or a team inspired you to greater achievement or service? Great women and men throughout history and across cultures come to mind.

In my youth, the greatest examples of inspiration and leadership were USA President John F Kennedy and Pope John XXIII. In a short time (his presidency was only 1000 days), JFK inspired a nation, and invited a new generation to lofty goals. Pope John inspired a world, inside and beyond Catholicism, to join in a rebirth of spirit and to work toward peace on earth (John XXIII, 1963).

President Kennedy and Pope John XXIII inspired many to make the world a better place to give their lives for others as well. Truly, these were calls to become servant leaders.

Sometimes inspiration and motivation can be found from much more humble sources. For example, a teacher, coach, parent or relative, supervisor, unknown/un-named saints, friend, or classmate.

St. Mother Theresa wrote¹, “None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love and together we can do something wonderful.” Mahatma Gandhi² writes similarly, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service of others.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.³ inspires us in a similar vein by encouraging all of us to take on the mantle of servant leadership,

Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love⁴.

Calls for teamwork and collaboration in pursuit of a goal may come from a government or political leader, a religious, philosophical, or social figure. Or it might be from influential athletes who capture the imagination of a planet and stir enthusiasm for a good cause.

Two of the greatest USA sports icons, Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan, were known for recognizing the value of teamwork and collaboration in their sporting successes.

Babe Ruth⁵ wrote, “The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.”

Michael Jordan of the NBA, one of the greatest ever to play the game of basketball, knew that teamwork was the key to enduring success when he wrote, “*Talent wins games; teamwork and intelligence win championships.*”⁶

As we all know, St Marcellin Champagnat, was not a famous statesman or sports figure. He was a simple country priest who had a vision. He used his vision and leadership to build a team to impact our world beyond his wildest imaginations over 200 years and counting. Think of it, from such humble beginnings, the global impact of our Marist fraternity. How did this happen? Servant Leadership and collaboration to an inspired goal.

“We need Brothers”, he would argue to his Marist confreres. His vision to educate and evangelize poor country children could not be done alone. And so, our Marist Brothers team began in January 1817 when Champagnat started assembling a team of young men to work together for his vision. Champagnat possessed enormous personal strength and self-confidence despite his minimal education. Bolstered by his firm faith and belief that Mary, our good Mother, would always be his ordinary resource, Champagnat dedicated his life for his brothers and the mission.

I believe that an integral part of the success of collaborative teams is the leadership component, often by a visionary leader who understands team dynamics. The most effective servant leaders must have a lot of “ego” and self-confidence like St Marcellin, along with a clear vision. The vision is a source of energy and can be transformative.

The quintessential servant leader is Jesus. In the Bible, we learn of and experience Jesus’ living word as a servant leader, as he grew into understanding his vision and mission:

Jesus stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

He said to them, “Today, this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing. (Lk 4: 16-21)⁷

In all four Gospels, Jesus’ teachings are shown in signs, works, sermons, and parables. Jesus exemplifies servant leadership, as he gathered around him strong teammates who would learn that the first would be last—they had to serve their sisters and brothers in the faith community.

Perhaps no event typifies servant leadership as much as shown in John 13: 15, when Jesus gives his disciples a stirring mandate after a most personal act of washing their feet. “If I, therefore, the master and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow so that as I have done for you should also do.”⁸

Jesus founded the Christian community to be a team of servant leaders. Over the next two thousand years, this paradigm would be interpreted for the good and bad in as many ways as there are Christians and Christian leaders.

In each of our own lives, we have found a home serving Jesus as Marists of Champagnat. My own life project as a Marist Brother for nearly five decades has been to live, work, and promote servant leadership in our communities, schools, and in our Church.

As Marist Brothers, we are committed to respect and support life in its diversity and uniqueness. We want to invite others to collaborate with us. So, let’s ask the question “What’s the Marist way to build a team? How can we Marist collaborate?”

We draw on 200 years of practical examples where Marists of Champagnat have been team builders in our educational and evangelical mission with millions of young people throughout the world.

We can also look to influential contemporary research on this topic. In his 1970 essay, “Servant as Leader”, Robert K. Greenleaf, a noted authority on group dynamics, first coined the phrase ‘servant leadership’:

Servant Leadership is an approach that people have used for centuries. As a servant leader, you’re a ‘servant first’, focusing on the needs of others, especially team members, before you consider your own. You acknowledge other people’s perspectives, give the support they need to meet their work and personal goals, involve them in decisions where appropriate, and build a sense of community within the team.

Many of us act as servant leaders and have been so for years, often with little or no training. In my experience with team building as a servant leader, there are some fundamental questions. Do I know what I am doing? Am I interested and willing to invest myself into this service and work? Do I realize that my work or service is not about me, but for the good of another?

A true servant leader knows the risks. We hear Jesus in John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (New American Bible, 1970).

Teammates and community members must know the risk of personal sacrifice as well. “Do we know what we’re doing as a team? Is the task clear? Do we share the same goal? Is the goal worth it?”

The task you might be asked to take on could be to foster healthier adult living in a religious community. You might be asked to coordinate the details to provide safe and available shelter and care for needy neighbors, or homeless street people, or refugees. You might have the professional task to create excellent educational centers. Choose any Corporal Work of Mercy as outlined in Matthew 25:35-45, and you will be called to service and

self-sacrifice for others at varying costs. “Whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me” (New American Bible, 1970).

According to Larry C Spears, former President of the Robert K Greenleaf Center of Servant Leadership, ten characteristics emerge in true servant leaders. “These characteristics include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community” (Spears, 2018).

Indeed, these characteristics inform our Marist style of leadership.

Not long ago, in my professional ministry, I accepted an assignment to be a school administrator for a large secondary school. Reflecting on one of my previous roles as a school leader, I noted how Spear’s characteristics seem to emerge naturally in my work with my peer leaders, faculty, staff, and students. I next attempted to learn more about, develop and apply these characteristics of Servant leadership in my role.

In my case, I replaced an unpopular administrator who finished his terms as school leader having alienated his faculty, peers and colleagues and become very autocratic in his leadership style. Although the school was moderately successful in its academic mission, faculty, staff, students, and parents reported that the atmosphere of school leadership lacked innovation or vision for the future. Some reported that school leadership felt toxic.

Although at that time, my professional experience as school leader was minimal, I had many years of servant leadership and being a team builder in other educational situations. In my first year as a school leader at that school, I spent countless hours listening to the school stakeholders. Not surprisingly, the consensus was that both school personnel and students felt unheard. No one seemed to care about their concerns, efforts, or ideas. Taking the time to listen was an obvious first step and a good beginning.

Active listening built a real bond among the administrative team, faculty, and staff, and especially with the students.

Not only did I listen, I also came to recognize the strengths and challenges of these groups. And I shared their feelings throughout the community to be transparent. In short, I was able to foster a much greater sense of trust with the stakeholders and earned the chance to share my vision for the school mission. Conversations were collaborative; we shared ideas and planned for a better school experience on all levels. We sought to make sure that our faculty had the knowledge, support, and resources they needed to do their jobs effectively. In various creative ways, we worked to nourish figuratively and literally a healthy and happier workplace, first by sharing the life of Jesus Christ as a model through mutual respect and care for everyone in the school. Then by creating an atmosphere to foster lifelong learning and a sustainable Marist family. As a school community, we took time to gather for educational meetings as well as prayer, Eucharist, meals, and celebrations.

In our lived experience of creating the school together, I was able to witness to and promote our Marist Champagnat values especially “to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and that to teach children, you must love them and love them all equally.”

Promoting collaboration and teamwork, I was able to build a strong administrative team and support academic leaders in their own areas and in establishing professional goals for the students. Together in myriads of meetings and groups, we strategized to create a clear and understandable mission statement as well as develop short-term strategies and long-term plans for school improvement and a desired future for meeting the diverse needs of our present and future students.

We did not refrain from confronting and addressing needs in areas of professional growth for our colleagues. Nor did we avoid giving negative feedback on behaviors that did not comply with the Faculty, Staff,

or Student Handbooks. Although time-consuming and very demanding, I made sure my office door was open for any honest feedback as well from all members of the school community.

Within a few short years, with a lot of sacrifice and good will, the environment and the attitude within the school community changed radically and positively on every level. Staff and students knew, could recite, and were committed to the school mission. Proving the point, the school received an exemplary commendation from a national accrediting review and set off on a trajectory for continued excellence in all levels of its mission. This professional achievement continues to be recognized nationally even after more than a decade has passed.

However, despite many positive examples we all know about in our lives and cultures, not all situations or organizations value different types of leadership. Servant Leadership and teambuilding are less desired values in hierarchical or autocratic systems.

I'm sure we are all familiar with being in such systems or working for a leader (boss, coach, principal, leader, or whoever is 'in charge'), who demands full control and authority over all decision-making. Many of us have lived or worked under hierarchical or authoritarian leadership. We may have had first-hand experiences: in our country, or government, military, or law enforcement agency environment; business, health care organizations, or social agency or school. It might even be our church or belief-sharing group.

For these organizations, to be successful, often employees or colleagues had to follow the rules, accept disciplines, order, conformity, regularity. Difference, diversity, or dissent were not valued. Self-sacrifice to the operative value was required. In return, the system provided stability and conformity not requiring thought or consideration from the fellow team members.

As members of religious communities, we know the popular maxim, “Keep the rule and the rule will keep you.” No doubt, there have been and still are religious communities that have promoted this maxim and they have often been successful in attracting members and providing mission to the Church. In Marist of Champagnat history, there were times and places when hierarchical models of community leadership instead of collaboration and teamwork were prominent. In these times, community superiors determined the life and work of the members of the team. Members grew in esteemed value if they followed the rules as model religious and dismissed their own personal growth or need. They offered their lives for the community order.

History teaches us as well that there have been political, social, and religious moments when the autocratic and hierarchical leaders have benefitted societies at large at the cost of care for the needs of others. However, we also can cite many horrifying and catastrophic experiences when the needs of others are ignored or not considered important. Too often, autocratic and hierarchical systems brought forth social, political, and religious intolerance, division, systematic injustice, greed, lack of human respect, wars, destruction, and holocaust.

Clearly, advocating for collaboration and team building, and living as Servant leaders can bring a humanizing and personal balance to some of these autocratic and hierarchical systems on our planet today.

For more than 200 years, Marists of Champagnat have taken the path to serve others by giving of ourselves for the mission to young people and poor children throughout the world. We can be best recognized by our collaboration and team building as Servant leaders as we follow Jesus Christ, our first servant leader, and St. Marcellin Champagnat, our Founder and model.

Keys to Successful Team Collaboration

- *Be open-minded, clear, and committed to a vision.*
- *Invite others to join the team.*
- *Know the risk to give of yourself.*
- *Listen to others and then listen to yourself. Especially know yourself-your motivations, your drivers, your life perspectives, your personal blocks and biases.*
- *Be supportive and honest; the truth builds self-confidence.*
- *Take time to celebrate your work and time together.*
- *Pause regularly to see how you are doing as a team. Keep looking ahead.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIONS

1. Take an inventory of your own experience of team building and collaboration.
2. Have you applied the characteristics of servant leadership in your Marist leadership?
3. What have you learned? What was the risk you encountered?
4. How well did your team respond to your efforts?
5. How did your efforts as a leader make your fellow team members better?

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Notes

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PART IV

TRAILS AND FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 16



Biblical Pointers on Fraternity for Leadership Oriented Towards Service

Br. Josep Maria Soteras
General Councilor

At this stage of the match, of “my match”, settling down to write about leadership is, at the very least, brash. To boast about one’s own successes and to hide the errors in the exercise of authority, whether on a personal level or that of a group, is an almost inevitable temptation. Popular wisdom and the Bible offer a good number of phrases that reveal the frequency with which this situation comes up: “*the shoemaker’s son always goes barefoot*”, “*not to practice what one preaches*”, “*tell me what you are talking about, and I will tell you what you lack*”, “*physician, heal yourself*” (Lk 4: 23)... Throughout these pages, more than one reader will remember the words of Jesus, “*do what they tell you, but do not do what they do, because they do not do what they say*” (Mt 23: 3).

Being very aware of this reality, it is not easy to begin writing on this theme. If we were prudent, we might present a synthesis of the elements of “servant leadership”¹ and which we find well described by various authors (Blanchard, K. and Broadwell, R., 2018; Gutiérrez Blanco, L. C., 2009; Blanchard, K. and Hodges, Ph., 2007; Maxwell, J. C., 2007; Prosser, S., 2007; Howell, D. N., 2003)², beginning with its champion, R. K. Greenleaf (2002), who started this movement with his book, *Servant Leadership* in 1970. Apparently, the object of this chapter will be to give a biblical foundation, since in this religious tradition, is to be found the principal inspiration for this model of leadership.

However, recourse to the Bible, makes this exercise even more dangerous. The reason is that we will be using a venerable text which arouses reverence as a tool to justify the theory. Even up to our day, we see many powerful people in our world seeking the benefit of a biblical interpretation that is favorable to their interests. This is practically the only criticism which Jesus throws at the “religious professionals”, without any attempt to soften it. He calls them *hypocrites and whitewashed tombs...* (Mt 23: 27-32).

So, adopting a less prudent attitude, the focus of these pages will tackle the biblical perspective from a point of view that is almost taboo in

a religious context, but which inevitably is associated with any leadership: power and its self-justifying temptations. In this path, the subtitle of this article could well be something like “biblical manual of bad practices”, given of course that the good practices are in everyone’s mind and which will be developed in the other chapters.

Leonardo Boff (Brazilian theologian) remembered that in his book *Jesus Christ Liberator* (1978) he had provoked a certain feeling of discomfort in some ecclesiastical circles, but nothing more. However, his real institutional “via crucis” occurred when he published *Church: Charism and Power* (1986), where he approached, without any euphemisms, this category which was officially invisible in the Church. Even though much has happened since then, we are still struggling with our own resistance. Failing to call things by their correct name brings us very easily to a corruption of language. In this way, we sacrifice holy things on the altar of power so that this can continue to take refuge in its comfortable anonymity. How easy it is to cover up the desire for power with service! If we call it service, unaware of what it really is, we will end up being victims of what we wish to ignore: the deformations of power will go on growing greater, without any opposition and becoming offended if anyone should question the status quo.

For this biblical topic, we will use three pairs of individuals: two are obvious but the last pair appears less so. However, all of them are connected by a certain element of fraternity: they are “brothers” in some way and between them some disagreement arises that has something to do with power.

Cain and Abel: Jealousy, Violence, Victimhood

This is one of the primordial pairs of individuals whose role is to unveil, by means of a narrative, the quintessence of the human condition (Gn 4: 1-16). If Adam and Eve express diversity and complementarity in the creative work of God (Gn 1: 27; 2: 22), Cain and Abel reveal the radical kinship that permeates everything: in the end, we are all one (Gn 4: 1-2).

Cain and Abel represent two types of societies that were traditionally rivals: agrarian and pastoral. The one was rooted in a place and the other was nomadic. One was relatively recent and the other had a long tradition. Both assume a certain representative, collective role, exemplifying a style of life, and, in a certain way, exercising leadership.

With their sacrifice (Gn 4: 3-4), both sought divine acceptance, that is to say, good fortune –or “blessing” in biblical terms. However, there are many factors in play that success is, frequently, random, occasional, or elusive. It does not always favor everyone equally and when this does happen, competition for the first place emerges and the desire to impose one’s own plan.

As a matter of fact, if we look at things from another perspective, God –or reality– is blessing Cain, encouraging him with a challenge that should give him a push to develop and improve his cultivation of the earth, which is still in its beginning stages and with less tradition than the life of raising animals (Gn 4: 7). The adage of Einstein is certain, “*if you do not wish to have the same results, do not always do the same thing*”. In place of this, at this time one of the major protagonists of human history makes its appearance: **envy** (Gn 4: 5-6). The experts say, that envy is the capital sin that which is most widespread and the least recognized –women sometimes but men, never. Possibly it is the sin with the most disguises.

Envy, joined to the inherited resistance to change, makes them opt for the easy path: eliminate competitors (Gn 4: 8). The term sin does not seem to be associated with the search for a personal or collective gain, as happens in the episode of the forbidden fruit (Gn 3), but when in order to get it, it is necessary to damage one’s neighbor (Gn 4: 9-10). In the original Hebrew, the word “sin” appears for the first time in the case of this pair of brothers (Gn 4: 7). Fortunately, in our institutional contexts, we do not get to the extreme point of physical damage, but in ecclesiastical and curial circles, with exquisite courtesy, there abounds the very refined skill to damage the other with veiled insinuations, half-truths, subtle devaluation,

critical words, cynicism disguised as humor, innocent commentaries that no-one takes as innocent... and allowing that “*day pours out the word to day, and night to night imparts knowledge*” (Ps. 19(18): 3); in this case, we are not speaking about the Word of God, but pure poison.

Reflect on this.

Throughout his time of office, a leader who aspires to fulfill his function in terms of service (Servant leadership), will necessarily encounter this reality. For this reason, it is not too much to ask ourselves how we intend to handle envy, our own and that of others in relation to us. To give a good answer to this question, and to prepare for the reality, will give us a good way of measuring what we will be capable of putting into practice in our relationships.

The apparent victory of Caín brings with it a curse: **violence** will follow him everywhere. Only the threat of a greater evil can contain him (Gn 4: 14–15.24). From that moment on, he will not be a peaceful worker, settled in some bucolic village, but he will be a fugitive always on the move, a founder of cities (Gn 4: 16–17), which the biblical author considers being a degradation of the rural world. According to this understanding, the city is a human construction, established by aggression and violence, which threatens systematically the beauty of the divine plan (Babel, Gn 11: 1–9; Ex 2: 13). No construction which comes out of these conditions will be sustainable.

Reflect on this.

This is another aspect that appears in the living out of servant leadership. There is no service without a certain degree of aggressivity or even of violence, active and/or passive. It is basic to recognise this in order to maintain a level of control. Two questions are relevant here: to what extent does the aggressivity associated with my service damage my leadership and the plan

which I am trying to bring to fruition? Is this level of aggressivity inevitable or might it be reduced? How?

Seeing the consequences that Caín suffers, we might ask ourselves if he is not a victim? Does God not victimize him by rejection? Will he not be the victim of his own envy or of the success of his brother? This is even more the case when, at a level below the current story, we discover the trace of an earlier story which exalted a strong Cain as a model to follow faced with a rather bland Abel, who was lazy or vain, whose very name means “vain, empty or inconsistent”. What is more, traditionally there were nomadic shepherds who, in their turn, threatened to take advantage of the labor of those who worked the land. Would Cain not have been a victim of those who were jealous of his courage and strength? Is it not possible that they made him into a guilty figure in order to defend themselves from those who took care of animals? Could not Cain have complained of the treatment that the biblical tradition dealt out to him degrading him in this way and exalting his brother? In his eyes, any of these arguments could legitimize his retaliation, retribution, or vengeance.

If we try to go a little deeper, it would not be difficult to recognize that behind these reproaches **victimhood** crouches. This is the case when one assumes the role of victim in order to obtain some reward, normally to the detriment of another person. It is very common in the context of gender violence: abusive conduct is justified by the supposed maltreatment previously meted out by the real victim.

Reflect on this.

In a way that could be more accentuated than in other models of leadership, the one who seeks to lead by serving could encounter the feelings of a victim, in himself or others. In these cases, it will be important to ask ourselves seriously who the real victim is. May it not be that the individual himself or the other person is being a victim as a form of manipulation? If this were

to happen, to whatever degree, the next question that arises would be: how do we help ourselves get out of this insidious trap?

Moses and Pharaoh: Power, Fragility, and Vision

The biblical story suggests, by circumstantial facts that these are step-brothers. The young Moses had to flee from Pharaoh, accused of murder (Ex 2: 11-15). On his return (Gn 4: 19), the same text confirms that the throne was occupied by the successor, the heir (Ex 2: 23), with whom he had shared the first years of life at court, as a step-brother (Ex 2: 10).

Certainly, this “familial” relationship adds some tension to the story. We are not dealing with two people who do not know each other. The conflict is not between two social extremes: the top and the lowest group of dispossessed, but is in the bosom of the royal family, at the very centre of the Egyptian power structure.

In the heat of this confrontation, it would be easy to read into it a clash of egos, of the protagonists or of the gods whom they represent and, of whom, both declare themselves to be fervent “servants”. In their names, both justify the legitimacy of their *power*. Both appear to be zealous defenders of God’s cause, and this is usually the antechamber of violence without scruples. Now, a subtle nuance distinguishes them: while Pharaoh is the one who is sustaining the side of God, in the case of Moses, it is God who is sustaining him, and his cause. Who is defending whom? Who is serving or using the other? Here it is the order of the facts that alters the outcome. A very fine line separates them and, with great facility, the perversion of religious language permits putting God at the service of one’s own authority.

Among the examples in the religious life, that are far from being sporadic, we can bring to mind one from our own origins, when Fr. Courveille caused an election in the Hermitage to see who should be

the superior. Before the unanimous vote of the brothers in favor of Fr. Champagnat, Fr. Courveille insisted on the necessity of a superior for the three priests who, at that time, were staying in the house –of course, without success– (Coste, J. y Lessard, G., 1985, p. 376). Later, when living in a Trappist monastery, he wrote that the moment had arrived to recognize a superior and that, if they were seeking one, he was willing to take on the task. The priests, “*extremely contented*” –as the chronicler points out–, answered that Fr. Courveille should remain where he was (Coste, J. y Lessard, G., 1985, p. 377).

I remember a good superior of a young community who was brimming with creativity, and used to repeat “*you are the accelerator and I am the brakes*”. His presence was only felt on the curves. By example, one of the very many fruits of that time was the music group Kairoï, well known for their contribution to the life of the Church. This superior stood behind everyone; On the other hand, other Superior understood leadership as the one who goes ahead and takes possession of the accelerator. Something like this happened when a young brother snapped at a very jealous director of “his” school: “*The school is so much yours that it cannot be mine*”.

Reflect on this.

In the exercise of servant leadership, it is good to be aware of how power is distributed in the group. There are tools for this to assist in bringing back a balance. It is often useful to ask about the position in which the leader usually visualizes himself, whether at the head of or at the back of the group, and whether this corresponds to the perception of the others. In this context, it is interesting to discover the justifications that someone gives and which he lays aside. For the narrow gate of servant leadership, only the one may enter who can really divest himself of this baggage.

The story of the liberation from Egypt attributes to Moses a very important role that captivates the reader. This image is reflected in the

artistic impressions which have been made of him throughout history. It is sufficient to remember the famous Moses of Michelangelo in Rome (St. Peter in Chains, 1513-1515) or the movie “The Ten Commandments” (1956).

The grandeur of the power which helps Moses is contrasted with that of Egypt, without equal at that time. In the face of this amazing display, the details which show the extreme *fragility* of Moses and his limits are almost imperceptible. He comes from an unimportant family (Ex 2: 1; 6: 20; Nm 26: 59), is exposed to death from the moment of his birth (Ex 1: 16.22; 2: 15), and subjected to the arbitrariness of uncertain luck (Ex 2: 4.19-20). Is he a murderer or a protector? (Ex 2: 11-14.16-17); is he an Israelite or Egyptian? (Ex 2: 11.19). His loyalty is always questioned (Ex 14: 11-12; 16: 3; Nm 14: 2-4; 20: 4; 21: 5); he has a number of insecurities (Ex 3: 11.13; 4: 1.8-9; Nm 11: 11-15); he has difficulties in speaking and is given a mission where the word is essential (Ex 4: 10.13-14) (Cain, S., 2012); his leadership is disputed, including among his own family (Nm 12: 1-2). On the other side, he receives the essential help of women (Ex 1: 17-21; 2: 2-10.20-21) (cf. Batallé Prats, I., 2021)³, of his siblings, Aaron (Ex 4: 14-17.27-31) and Miriam (Ex 2: 4.7; 15: 20-21), of Jethro, his father-in-law (Ex 18: 13-27), of Joshua (Ex 17: 9; Nm 13: 16; Dt 1: 38; 31: 1-4.7-8; Jos 1: 1), of the elders (Ex 3: 16; 4: 29; Nm 11: 10-17), of the prophets (Nm 11: 24-30); and of the levites (Ex 32: 25-29).

This fragility is not equal to the awesome mission he takes on. The religious tradition interprets this disproportionality as an expression of the power of God in him (Nm 12: 3) even though, to tell the truth, in the day-to-day living out of his leadership, the reality is not quite so simple as in the readings we founded it.

Fr. Mayet (1850) relates the opinion that Fr. Terrailon and another companion had of Fr. Champagnat and which, without desiring to, they probably projected onto him in their relationship to him: “*Fr. Champagnat gathered his brothers in order to form them, and he was ignorant of what he was*

giving them: he taught them to read when he himself did not read well; he taught them to write and he himself did not follow the grammatical rules when he wrote..." (Coste, J. Y Lessard, G., 1985, p. 396). How could Fr. Champagnat deal internally with this latent disregard on the part of his companions?

Reflect on this.

A sign of authentic servant leadership is the sensation of vertigo or disproportion between the mission that has been taken on and the awareness of one's own fragility (Peter, R., 2004). Resolving this contrast is not easy, but it is key. There are those who tend to affirm the power of the position; others develop a false humility or exalt their own qualities; some give themselves over to constant complaining or to scolding; and others, bewail their limits and the errors of other people... All of these are unhealthy mechanisms which lead to false consolations. What would be a healthy and efficient way to approach one's own limits, both for one's personal development and for the leadership which one is serving?

Due precisely to his weaknesses, even Moses falls into some type of distrust, along with all the people during the march through the desert (Dt 1: 29-37). By means of the geographic symbol, the biblical story makes clear that the promised land will only be possible for free people, who have not taken upon themselves the deformation of slavery. All of those who came out of Egypt died in the desert and only those who were born in freedom can enter (Dt 1: 37-40; 4: 21-22). Despite everything, Moses is given the favor of arriving at the border and is allowed to contemplate the promise with his own eyes (Dt 3: 23-28; 32: 48-52).

The episode that closes the Pentateuch, austere and tender at the same time, shows the service which the leader gives in his last breath, when uncertainty invades the scene. The people had arrived at the foot of Mount Nebo, which faced the promised land (Nm 36: 13; Dt 34: 1). Before his eyes there arose a mountain; beyond the summit, maybe the promise

lay (Dt 1: 22-25), but there were unhelpful reports from those who had explored the land years before (Dt 1: 26-28).

The announcement of the end is given to Moses (Dt 31: 14). With this news, people tend to look back and remember what has been lived through. The following day holds little personal interest. However, Moses climbs the mountain with the attentive gaze of the people upon him and at the summit, without looking back, he remains with eyes fixed on the horizon, looking closely at the content of the promise and then he finally closes his eyes, which have been filled with the future (Dt 34: 1-5). It is not about the past but the future. There is much to see! This image remains impressed on the retina of the people. With this gesture, he offers them an icon that invites them to go on with hope without looking back or yearning for the “*garlic and onions of Egypt*” (Nm 11: 5-6; Ex 16: 3). A **vision** that everyone can share in, but which the leader gets close to, energizing a trust that helps to overcome the residual resistance arising from that first failed exploration. This is not a compulsive optimism but rather it is a trusting hope.

Reflect on this.

In order to discern if a style of leadership is visionary and is not imprisoned in the present or by what has been inherited, one could evaluate whether the leader is more preoccupied with the structure or by people. Is the leader more attentive to threats than to opportunities? Is the leader more alert to what might be lost than to what might be gained? Is the leader more interested in conserving or in bringing new things to birth? Is the leader more concerned with maintaining than with transforming? Is the leader more concerned with making things happen than with whom they make visible? Is the leader more eager for the merits than for the results? What other items might be added and to what model does each one of the contrasting poles correspond to? What differentiates compulsive optimism from trusting hope?

Solomon and Stephen: Institution, Prophecy, and Martyrdom

After the entrance into the promised land, the Israelites must conquer the promise; it is a gift that requires effort (Jos 1: 1-6; Jgs 1). Little by little, as the people continue to expand, there emerges the need to consolidate. Up to David, whom the Bible exalts as the king par excellence, the ark of the covenant had remained in a tent, a memorial of the itinerant experience which had shaped them as a people (2 Sam 6: 17; 1 Chr 16: 1; 2 Chr 1: 3-4). However, this fragile tabernacle is no longer sufficient to sustain the spreading out and the power that has been acquired. Living with the nearby peoples had augmented the risk of losing their identity, and with this, they would have lost the whole reason for the conquest. (Jgs 2: 20-23; 1 K 3: 1-3; 11: 1-8).

Therefore, in order to preserve all of the patrimonies, there was nothing better than a temple built by a king, united to the royal palace, where all the powers that the people revered would be united (1 K 6-7; 2 Chr 3-4). The proposal of this *institution* is to delimit the identity and shape it. His idea was not entirely exclusive and, with the passage of time, various spaces were added to welcome almost everyone in distinct courts: one for the priests, another for male Jews, then another for females, and finally, also a space for the gentiles (Ex 38: 9-20; 1 K 6: 36; 2 Chr 4: 9; 20: 5; Ez 40: 17; Mk 11: 15; 12: 41-42). We must not lose sight of the fact that the construction or restoration of a temple also served throughout history to confirm the power of some tyrant and to cover under its mantle his atrocities.

From a historical point of view, the reign of Solomon was rather controversial. However, the Bible exalts him as the human expression of wisdom (1 K 5: 9-14; 2 Chr 1: 7-12). To illustrate this, he did to take on the construction of the temple as the main protagonist, but it was an episode that was practically irrelevant in comparison with other imperial challenges. A dispute between two women regarding the care for a newborn (1 K 3: 16-28) serves the author to show that wisdom in governing without personal

attention, unaware of concrete necessities, absent, isolated, or oblivious to a concern for people would be completely insufficient to sustain power.

Servant leadership does not mean that some aspects are ignored in order to prioritize others. The secret is not in the selection of priorities but in the right balance, including among aspects that are apparently opposed but necessary. The care for and consolidation of the institution does not lose sight of the charismatic origins (though they may be precarious, are an irreplaceable reference for identity), the welcome for all those who can contribute in some way (in their corresponding courts), and people in their concrete reality⁴. What resources can help to maintain this equilibrium? How to become aware when things are out of balance? Asking people about how one is perceived can clarify things greatly. Fr. Champagnat is a wonderful example of this wise balance.

Stephen recalled the construction of the temple of Solomon in his Christian sermon (Acts 7: 46-47). This institution united them in a fraternity that went beyond the ties of blood and went beyond the frontiers of time. The Samaritans, who had an alternative temple on Mt. Gerizim (Dt 11: 29; 27: 12; Jos 8: 33; Jn 4: 20-21), were outside this fraternity and, often the enmity was greater than with the gentiles (Neh 3: 33-34; Lk 9: 53-54; Jn 4: 9.27). From here we find the hostility and the rivalry which are part of the parable of the Good Samaritan, with people who are rivals because of the temple (Lk 10: 29-37).

The regular attendance of the first Christians at the temple worship (Acts 2: 46; 3: 1; 5: 12.42) reveals the high regard which this institution had in their eyes. Gradually, with the new groupings, this appreciation was somewhat diluted. The Jews from the diaspora had already worked out their own identity, not so much in relation to the temple, but to the fulfillment of the law in their ordinary lives, with a several little daily rituals. The distance had separated the temple from their daily lives and the synagogue became more relevant. Those who became Christians from this background (Acts

4: 36) read the tradition of Jesus from their own perspective, in such a way that the differences with the believers from Palestine were accentuated to the point of provoking the so-called crisis of the Hellenists (Acts 6: 1-4). Stephen was the spokesman of the group; he was known for his powerful *prophetic* words (Acts 6: 5.8-15; 7: 51-56). Even though he assumed the tradition regarding the temple, its importance was relativized, to the point that he affirmed that Solomon built it on his own initiative, without God requesting it, given that the whole of creation is the authentic temple that God gave to us (Acts 7: 47-50). Stephen preached in the synagogue (Acts 6: 9), and we never see him in the temple like Peter and John (Acts 3: 1) or in the local community (Acts 2: 46; 5: 12.42).

The Hellenists, with their more open view of the world, welcomed outsiders beyond the courts provided for in the temple. If until then it was necessary to go to Jerusalem (1 K 5: 14; 10: 1-9; Jer 3: 17), the Hellenists preferred to take the message outside its walls, even to the ends of the earth (Lk 24: 47; Acts 1: 8). So we see Philip preaching to the Samaritans (Acts 8: 4-8.14-17) and even to an Ethiopian prince (Acts 8: 26-40); in Antioch, certain Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene began to preach directly to the gentiles (Acts 11: 19-20); Peter himself, in Caesarea, felt the call to break with the strict boundaries which stopped him from embracing what had been until then outside his purview (Acts 10). These are the forerunners of Paul's mission. This dynamic shows that the temple could actually destroy what it was supposed to protect. Finally, it took a whole council to validate this movement and, with this, the first Christian generation opened itself definitively to the future (Acts 15; Gal 2: 1-10).

Reflect on this.

Leadership must not only serve the present while being faithful to the past, but it must be a vehicle to move towards the future of the project to which it is committed⁵. It is not necessary that those in leadership have to come up with the idea, but they must be able to welcome those who do, discern with them what is essential and what is not, and provide the means to achieve

the goal, at a convenient peace. This is not simply an attitude but a reversal. In this sense, it is not idle to inquire about the time, the energies, the people, and the resources which will be made available in order to welcome the future, and whether the resources that will be dedicated to the future are proportionate to those dedicated for present use or in preserving the past.

Within this context of leadership, how do we differentiate between “vision” (Moses) and “prophecy” (Stephen)?

An openness to the future sometimes demands that we have to sacrifice the temple, which is to say, to break some of the molds. As means as they are, need not necessarily be perpetuated along with the message, the identity, the charisma or the mission which they had the honor of bearing (Mt 26: 61; Mk 14: 58; Jn 2: 19-20; Acts 6: 13). At the beginning, this does not arouse enthusiasm among the majority of people, who usually *martyr* the messenger. This happened with Stephen (Acts 7: 57-60) and with many others, as Jesus himself had already spoken of (Mt 5: 12; 23: 29-31.37; Lk 13: 34).

Sometimes, as a defensive reaction, the group goes into its shell, or goes backwards, in a desperate attempt to save some essentials that no one believes are essential, but only appear to be so. It is enough to remember that, in the same era we are considering there arose a great enthusiasm around the temple, with various groups that competed to defend it (Lk 13: 1-5), and which ended up triggering a rebellion which was defeated and which ensured its total destruction in the year 70 A.D. (Mt 24: 1-2; Mk 13: 1-2; Lk 21: 5-6).

It is interesting to note that these rebel groups also ended up choosing martyrdom as the way to save honor when all had been lost. The emblematic episode is the collective suicide of the zealots in the fortress of Masada, the last bastion of Jewish resistance, around 72 or 73 A.D.

As a final reflection, we might remember the insistence of John Paul II to remain on the cross, when someone had whispered about a possible

abdication. If this is valid in general, what about Benedict XVI? Also, Jesus was tempted, being invited to get down from the cross and refusing to do so (Mt 27: 40; Mk 15: 29-30; Lk 23: 35-36). A subtle observation: if he had done so, then indeed he would have gained power! Great care needs to be taken with religious language!

Reflect on this.

Serving the future means also accepting some martyrdom, which is necessary in order to purify prophecy and, also in order to allow the group to channel their anger and their sorrow for the loss of something to which they had been attached, and which, without a doubt, fulfilled a function. But no longer.

It is also important to discern if some are using the way of martyrdom in a fraudulent way, which means, to maintain themselves in power, to prolong the life of what is obsolete or, as a last resort, to die in the attempt to save one's honor.

How can we distinguish the first kind of martyrdom from the second? How can we discern whether someone is tending towards one or the other?

Conclusion

As a final corollary, we might underline these three details.

First. With these and other similar elements, it should be sufficiently clear that the manipulation of religious language allows appending the title of “Servant leader” to any type of leadership: it is sufficient to discover an adequate argument and twist the words to fit (Stamateas, B., 2010)⁶. However, the pertinent question is whether this term really corresponds to the reality of the leader, no matter what title is used.

Second. No one should fall into the temptation of identifying his own leadership with Abel, Moses, the good elements of Solomon and Stephen or, even more, with Jesus, Mary, Joseph or Champagnat... In the person of the leader, every leader, all of these figures are present at the same time, as well as their contraries; evidently not the figures themselves but what they represent. To be aware of this multifaceted personal reality with honesty is, possibly the first step to advancing in the right direction. After this, one can move forward, adjusting the proportions.

Third. With different ways of expressing it, among the brothers the following idea has become popular, *“such and such a brother has sanctified his life by the way of virtue and sanctified his brothers in the community by the way of martyrdom”*. Servant leadership is only suitable for *imperfect people*; the *perfect* have other models at their disposal. Br. Basilio Rueda, referring to the passage of the old rule which dictated that the superior should be “holy, wise and healthy”, used to say *“not too holy, nor wise, nor healthy, so that he can understand the mediocre, the clumsy and the sickly”*. To serve is to come down and this does not go well with someone who aspires to ascend. Serving is not a way to project oneself in order to get to the desired position; it is the position itself. Let us remember that, in order to serve humanity, someone decided to abandon divine perfection in order to assume human weakness (Acosta, B. and Caviedes, J., 2021; Cortés, J., 2021)⁷.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What elements of the biblical tradition inspire me and help me to understand and to better live my life of service, in any stage of leadership? What aspects are calling from me a greater care and attention?
2. Both personally and institutionally, what principles will be of help to free leadership from its temptations or deformations? Which principles help you to better develop transparency, authenticity, and simplicity?

3. What kind of personal vigilance is useful for the practice of a really authentic leadership of service?
4. In the formation for leadership, how can we assist people to use power, influence, and authority in a healthy way?

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Notes

1 In the other chapters of this volume, we find an excellent development of these traits: the option to serve is the first so that one might be able to lead, discipleship, humility, truth and personal honesty, interest in the general wellbeing, etc.

2 One can check out numerous articles. Just to cite some from the last ten years: EKINCI, A., & SAKIZ, H. (2020). Servant leadership within the context of organizational efficacy. In *Handbook of research on positive organizational behavior for improved workplace performance* (pp. 86-101). IGI Global; LANGHOF, J. G., & GÜLDENBERG, S. (2020). Servant leadership: A systematic literature review—Toward a model of antecedents and outcomes. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(1), 32-68; SMITH, L. S. (2020). Christian leaders as servants: Accept the opportunity. In *Modern metaphors of Christian leadership* (pp. 95-113). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham; EVA, N., ROBIN, M., SENDJAYA, S., VAN DIERENDONCK, D., & LIDEN, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(1), 111-132; AMAH, O. E. (2018). Determining the antecedents and outcomes of servant leadership. *Journal of General Management*, 43(3), 126-138; GREEN, M. T., RODRIGUEZ, R. A., WHEELER, C. A., & BAGGERLY-HINOJOSA, B. (2016). Servant leadership: A quantitative review of instruments and related findings. *Servant Leadership: Theory & Practice*, 2(2), 5; PANACCIO, A., DONIA, M., SAINT-MICHEL, S., & LIDEN, R. C. (2015). Servant leadership and wellbeing. In *Flourishing in life, work and careers*. Edward Elgar Publishing; WASHINGTON, R. R., SUTTON, C. D., & SAUSER JR, W. I. (2014). How distinct is servant leadership theory? Empirical comparisons with competing theories. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics*, 11(1); PARRIS, D. L., & PEACHEY, J. W. (2013). A systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts. *Journal of business ethics*, 113(3), 377-393; SCHNEIDER, S. K., & GEORGE, W. M. (2011). Servant leadership versus transformational leadership in voluntary service organizations. *Leadership & Organization development journal*; DENNIS R., KINZLER-NORHEIM L., BOCARNEA M. (2010) Servant Leadership Theory. In: van Dierendonck D., Patterson K. (eds) *Servant leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan, London; PAROLINI, J., PATTERSON, K., & WINSTON, B. (2009). Distinguishing between transformational and servant leadership. *Leadership & Organization development journal*.

3 It is interesting to reclaim the role of women as a “conspiracy in favor of life” which sabotages the plans for death within which men move (Ex 1,16.22; 2,11-12.15). The feminine perspective is enriching the understanding of leadership with a particular contribution. Cf. BATALLÉ PRATS, I. (2021). *Atrévete a hacer las cosas a tu manera: La revolución del liderazgo de las mujeres*. Barcelona: Destino (Planeta).

4 Attention for the wellbeing of people is moving away from being merely a means, and gradually is becoming an essential element of any organization, being integrated as one of the goals. An increasing number of publications make this clear. One example is: cf. FERNÁNDEZ, M. (2019). *Trabaja en modo actitud*. Madrid: Mestas Ediciones S. L.

5 I find particularly exciting the approaches to the future that take as their reference point the empirical observation of reality, whether that be epidemics, the evolution of

society or botany, among many examples. Cf. GLADWELL, M. (2000). *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Little Brown Company; LALOUX, F. (2014). *Reinventing Organizations*. Paris-Strasbourg : Diateino; MANCUSO, S. (2017). *Plant revolution: Le piante hanno già inventato il nostro futuro*. Firenze: Giunti.

6 From time to time, it is advisable to apply a healthy hygiene when handling religious language. Some books can help, like that of STAMATEAS, B. (2010). *Intoxicados por la fe: Cómo ser libres de una religión tóxica y vivir una espiritualidad feliz*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana S.A. (Grijalbo).

7 Recently, for the specific context of the religious life, cf. ACOSTA, B. AND CAVIEDES, J. (2021). Un liderazgo sapiencial y colaborativo. *Horizonte en tiempos de reducción*. *Frontera Hegian*, 112; CORTÉS, J. (2021). Liderazgo en la Vida Religiosa. *Frontera Hegian*, 111.

CHAPTER 17



Leading with Mary in One's Heart

Br. Juan Carlos Fuertes
Provincial of Mediterranea
(2016-2022)

At the end of the apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis highlights some of Mary's virtues, indicating that they belong not to the weak, but to the strong, "who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves." (n. 288). In this chapter, we are going to look at some of those virtues that have traditionally been identified as feminine and that show the greatness of the human being. We could say that our Marist spirituality, being influenced by a woman, is full of feminine virtues. Those same virtues shape leadership with a Marian style.

In this emerging world of conflicts, domination, inequality, exploitation ... we realize that "humanity needs to change" (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 155) and seeks authentic love that helps people to grow, feel welcome, and leads to integration and peace.

There, in the midst of this world, we feel the call to universal brotherhood and we, as Marists, want to be the Marian face of a poor and servant Church. What can we contribute to make this dream come true? With what leadership style? Let us accompany Mary at the Annunciation; she will be our inspiration.

1. Vulnerability

Leading from vulnerability can seem contradictory if we have in our mind the image of a leader who has all the answers and who controls everything. However, with servant leadership, which seeks to "help people succeed" (Floyd, 2018, p. 61), it can bring us a different perspective.

The word "vulnerability" comes from the Latin word "vulnus" which means "wound" and indicates "the possibility of being injured" (Torralba, 2007, p.92). We can experience this situation of need at a bodily, psychological, social and spiritual level. There are many situations in which we find ourselves in need: in times of illness, in situations of mourning or loneliness, when we are searching for meaning ... (Sandrin, 2007). The

personal or social situation that we are living through can expose us to a greater or lesser degree to our own vulnerability.

There may also be a conscious search or an attitude of putting oneself in a situation of vulnerability in which a person can be sensitive to what life, people, or society are experiencing and allow that to “hurt” them inside. This personal hurt brings people to question their own convictions, their values, their choices ... and make decisions in order to respond to those experiences they have been through. These people would have - consciously - given life permission so that it can wound, question, and trouble them.

From this perspective, this would be a vulnerability that is imposed by our human nature, but there is another that is chosen and sought after. This, then, becomes a personal choice, which involves exposing oneself to uncertainty, risk, and emotional upset.

Brené Brown is a University of Houston professor and researcher who has been studying this issue for many years and presents it by speaking of Theodore Roosevelt’s speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris (1910). In him, she sees not so much the man who criticizes and looks at the other’s flaws, but the one who goes into the ring and with all his might dares to put himself at risk. This same author concludes that being vulnerable means getting involved, being totally inside the situation, which means for her to live genuinely, that is, to cultivate courage, compassion and human connections (Brown, 2016).

From this perspective, let us turn our gaze to the text of the message of the angel Gabriel to Mary at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1: 26-38). This text belongs to the literary genre “annunciation” that seeks to transmit to a specific recipient - in this case, Mary - a message that comes from God. In the text we can see the capacity of Mary, the servant of the Lord, to welcome the voice of God and her availability to get personally involved when she says “yes”. We could say that Mary is a

vulnerable person who allows herself to be challenged and who decides to commit herself to the plan that is presented to her. Mary gets involved and does so completely.

Viewed from this point of view, this Gospel passage contains various messages for our lives and for our way of exercising leadership. It is a message for all of us, since wherever you are – whether in your family or community, in your work as a Marist, in your faith group, or your youth group ... – keep in mind that leadership is not about a particular position, but is about the influence you can exert (Blanchard, 2012).

Reading this Gospel passage under the optic of vulnerability invites us firstly to expose ourselves to reality. That is, we seek to live in such a way that our lives can come into contact with reality, with what the people around us are living through. It is about looking for opportunities to be in personal contact, to get to know, and to actually experience situations for ourselves. This personal exposure to people and to the reality that surrounds us involves a huge emotional risk that we need to be aware of. The alternative is to live quietly and without disturbances.

In our style of leadership, we can create opportunities to meet, to have conversations, experiences... where we can see and listen to people; where we can detect needs and ask ourselves: what can I do? Certainly, one way to be exposed is to remain accessible, to be available for a conversation, or for interruptions, or to receive suggestions. Fear, failure, life's wounds, disappointments ... often translate into disconnection and isolation. Then masks, excuses, and emotional distancing begin to be used. Exposing ourselves to experience a situation that teaches us new things and that helps us grow, can be a good way to remain accessible.

The second invitation of the Gospel passage is to dare and to take risks. It is a commitment to creativity and innovation. It is taking a step forward in order to commit ourselves to the reality that we have come to know and to which we have been sensitive. In the midst of that reality,

we can become aware that something is not working or is presenting an opportunity for us to get involved (Laloux, 2016). The question that each of us can ask ourselves is: “What is worth doing, even if it fails?” (Brown, 2016, p. 42). Keep in mind that “truth and bravery are not always comfortable emotions, but they are never weak” (Brown, 2016, p. 37).

In relation to creativity, vulnerability is asking us to create an environment that allows us to experience new paths where we already live and work, where we interact with others (Sinek, 2018). This requires that we engender the necessary trust so that the people around us can fail when they have tried a new way of doing things, a new product, a new idea. Welcoming, accompanying, and learning from failure is a task that we as leaders can do.

Finally, we need to “regularize discomfort” (Brown, 2016, p. 194), since, if we want to learn, change and innovate, the path that we need to walk is uncertain and unpredictable. Assuming that this is a normal situation can help us reduce anxiety. It is not easy to travel through the unknown. However, novelty has its risks and we have to be aware of this fact. This should make us consider not to reduce the proposals we make, but rather to be aware of the possible risks that these might entail and, in this way, to learn to live with discomfort.

So, being vulnerable, saying “let it be done” as Mary said, means having risk, creativity, and uncertainty as companions on our journey. In this way, in the midst of the complex reality that surrounds us, with our own capacities and limitations, with the possibilities and difficulties of our institutions... we take on the role of leading and serving. That is to say in our own day “let it be done,” as Mary did. That is being vulnerable.

2. Purpose

many of us know the Blue Marists of Aleppo. Their story is that of a group of people who carried on the Marist mission in this Syrian city. With the arrival of war in that country in 2011 but, especially from 2012 when the battle of Aleppo began, they gave great attention and care to the people who were displaced from other parts of the city or from other cities. During all those years they greatly increased the assistance they had been giving already. The community areas were converted on several occasions into a great reception center for displaced families. They treated those who had been wounded in the war, distributed water around the neighborhoods, handed out food to families, and organized educational activities for children ... When the Battle of Aleppo came to a conclusion at the end of 2016, they were able to adapt their assistance to different groups who were in need: they visited a Kurdish refugee camp, prepared micro-projects to finance the start-up of small businesses for young people, helped women to take up some work... In all this, they never asked those they helped where they came from, nor what religion they professed, nor where they were heading. To them, these people were their brothers and sisters. The people, for their part, knew that they were the Blue Marists, although among them there were Christians and Muslims, men and women, Syrians and Kurds, religious and also Lay people.

From the story of the Blue Marists we learn that living vulnerably, letting ourselves be surprised, and taking risks, leads us to complicate our lives. At the same time, it allows us to live with purpose, with meaning. In this way, we go to the essential in our lives, without which we could not live.

To make this journey we need leadership that helps us search for meaning, that allows us to help others grow. In fact, “the leader grows by helping others to grow” (Blanchard, 2012, p. 93). Discovering the potential that people have and allowing them to develop in all their possibilities is

one of the best ways of caring for those who live and work with us. It is about offering tools so that each person has the ability to mature in all their dimensions: psychological, social spiritual, their work lives, and... We can call this accompaniment.

We need the same at the institutional level, in our mission: to discover the possibilities for growth, improvement ... A vision that helps us see the riches we already possess as a group and how to develop it is essential to be able to offer others the best of what we are.

In addition, a priority must be a long-term path of personal growth to help us discover the keys to our existence. It is an important tool for self-care. Doing this with others together can help us find purpose. It requires a high dose of personal maturity and courage to face up to our own history with its successes and mistakes, with its wounds and achievements. The objective is to learn to take life into our own hands and to be free to direct it to our purpose.

An alternative is to fall into continuous complaining, always pointing to someone else who can be held responsible for what happens to us. It is a faster and simpler route, but it does not get us anywhere. On the contrary, it corrupts us from the inside and subtly breaks our relationships with others.

When you complain, you are showing your disagreement with what someone else decided, planned, or did. By definition, you are being unpleasant, and you also hint that you would have done better. This is rarely a positive contribution, especially if you do it behind people's backs and do not say it to their faces. (Goldsmith, 2018, p.97)

Without a purpose in our lives and in our institutions, we can fill our time with activities and be super busy. We will have a frenetic pace of life. However, the true care for ourselves and for our people lies here: to

live with meaning. It is the best way to take care of ourselves. Therefore, helping others to find this meaning for their lives becomes one of the best ways to serve them.

The amount of work is not a problem in itself. Personal care does not mean emptying the calendar. It means expressing the purpose of our life and our mission in everything we do. This will mean eliminating some activities, meetings, and commitments that have nothing to do with us or with our institutions. At other times it will require increasing the workload. In fact, creative work and the capacity to love give meaning to life (Frankl, 1984). What fuels my / our purpose? How do I best express my life purpose? How do we best express the purpose of our mission?

The objective of accompaniment, as the care that we exercise towards people, does not consist in living in the place of others. We cannot pretend to save people from suffering, but we can help them to face life as it comes. Sometimes people seek us out to ask us for spectacular shortcuts to find happiness quickly. They are wrong. Maturity and quality of life are cultivated with patience, little by little and quietly.

Without purpose, the projects of the Blue Marists of Aleppo are simply a list of good deeds. Without purpose, both your life and mine, as well as our institutions, are a calendar full of things to do. Instead, the Blue Marists developed a purpose. Like Mary, they welcomed the voice of God through the people displaced by the war and they decided to be vulnerable and take risks. In the same way, the proposal that the messenger of God makes to Mary is to live with purpose, participate in the history of redemption, embrace God's plan (Lk 1, 35): become pregnant and allow God to be Emmanuel, God who is close. We could say that God, with infinite vulnerability, asks Mary to facilitate God's coming close to humanity, and thus able to make the divine tenderness present among human beings. Living meaningfully makes us vulnerable. Being vulnerable allows us to live with purpose.

3. Tenderness

Recognizing ourselves as vulnerable – ourselves and others – leads us to realize that we are in need of care (Laguna, 2020). We are vulnerable among the vulnerable. If at times we had the feeling of being perfect superheroes, who put the best of ourselves at the service of those who live in different conditions (social, economic, cultural ...), our own experience pushes us out of this dream and moves us to a reality in which we are all in need of each other. In this sense “we remember that no one saves himself alone, that it is only possible to be saved together” (Pope Francis, 2020). This means, that more than being autonomous, we are interdependent beings. Br Emili Turú expressed it beautifully in his letter for the Montagne year: “It is rather to recognize that the mission must be carried out in vulnerability, in humility, open to being evangelized by those we are called to evangelize” (Turú, 2015, p. 6).

This interdependence also leads us to consider our strategies for our life and mission. It is an invitation to approach life “with” others and not so much “for” others. Imagining projects of brothers and laity with young people, with the poor – counting on them from the beginning – is a consequence of this interdependence.

Another implication is to understand that caring is two-sided; it is an active and passive verb at the same time and refers to actively caring and also allowing oneself to be cared for. Doing so improves our leadership skills. In our mission we enrich the lives of others, but our lives are also enriched. Every meeting, every conversation, every planning, every failure... they are all an occasion to develop our potential, to learn, and to mature.

From this point of view, a community is a network of care, a network of relationships. It is a place where we live in a permanent exchange of ideals, feelings, plans, and history. It is a place where no one is immune, and everyone is exposed to reality (Boff, 2015). It is there that we live the

tenderness that “erupts when people de-center from themselves, go out in the direction of the other, experience the other as other, participate in that person’s life and let themselves be touched by that individual’s life history” (Boff, 2015, p. 65). It is important to recognize that tenderness is caring without obsessing, without the need to supplant other people, to steal their way of being, to plagiarize their dreams, or to numb their concerns. It is the place where we can walk together and share our vulnerability, which is the place from which our wealth is born.

In the account of the Annunciation, we contemplate the wonderful interconnection of two vulnerable beings: God, who asks permission to make his dreams come true, and Mary, who risks the uncertainty of accepting God’s voice. They need each other. There, in the midst of that vulnerability, is where life is born. There we allow ourselves, along with other people, to care without supplanting, and to need each other.

Conclusion

To lead in the style of Mary at the Annunciation is to do so from the place of vulnerability, which means to let ourselves be touched by reality, by people, and daring to say “yes”. This allows us to develop the courage to live with purpose and to make that journey towards what is essential in life. There, when we arrive at what is essential, we find compassion, tenderness and interconnectedness.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Like Mary in her “let it be done,” as a leader what challenges have you said “yes” to lately?

2. In what part of your mission do you need to be more present? What situation do you need to face head on? Where in your work are you finding the most inspiration?
3. Like Mary, who welcomed the voice of God, what part of the reality in which you are immersed is currently touching your heart the most?
4. Can you define the purpose of your life? What is essential for you and what makes you come alive? How much time do you spend talking to someone about the essentials of your life? How much time and resources do you spend helping others seek their life purpose?
5. How are you helping to discover and develop the purpose of the task you are working on?
6. What interconnections generate within you greater confidence and dynamism? Which ones do you think might give you a new view of things?

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CHAPTER 18



Marcellin Champagnat, a Model of Servant Leadership

Br. Benjamin Consigli
General Councilor

Marcellin Champagnat, by his own account, was clearly not an intellectual master as defined by academic performance or formal education. We must remember that formal education in the rural areas of France in the years after the Revolution of 1789 was very poorly organized in the rural areas. In 1803, when two diocesan representatives arrived in Marlihes looking for candidates for the seminary, Marcellin was fourteen years old and had an incomplete education. Before he would be able to commence the study of Latin, which was necessary for the priesthood, Marcellin would have to be able to read and write French. Even his father, Jean Baptiste, believed this educational obstacle would be hard to overcome for Marcellin. Yet, his mind was made up---from that moment on, he thought only of becoming a priest. After two years of relatively intense study with Benoit Arnaud, his brother-in-law, his progress was so negligible, that Arnaud told Mrs. Champagnat that Marcellin “has too few talents to succeed” and did not show much capacity for formal learning” (Zind, October 1971, p. 8).

In November 1805, Marcellin went to the junior seminary at Verrières to begin his formal study for the priesthood. He was sixteen years old, big, uncomfortable with formal written and spoken French, and not the most academically intelligent in the class. For Marcellin, it was back to what we might today call the “beginners’ class.” At the end of the year, his results were so poor that he was advised not to return to the seminary. Nevertheless, he would eventually spend long years of seminary study and overcome many obstacles to become a priest. His fellow seminarians all agreed that he possessed neither the talents nor the necessary resources to attempt, with any hope of success, the foundation of a congregation. According to Father Denis Maîtreperrière, Marcellin “*had in fact all that was humanly necessary to prevent the success of his enterprise*”¹. Yet, in spite of this, he is considered by many to be among the most significant founders and leaders in the history of the Church (Balko, 1994, pp. 22-38).

So, what allowed this simple boy from rural France to set his mind on providing for others the formal education which he himself lacked? Brother Jean-Baptiste states it clearly:

Father Champagnat owed much to the success of his ministry and in the foundation of his Institute, to his bright, open, friendly and considerate character with its ability to resolve situations of strife. An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts and disposing minds to accept without difficulty and even with pleasure, his opinions, his instructions, and his reproofs. (Furet, 1989, p. 266)

In studying some of his correspondence and reviewing some of the testimony of those of who knew him, it is my belief that Marcellin was a gifted servant leader whose extraordinary faith and trust in God allowed him to accomplish what many thought improbable if not impossible. To examine this premise further, it would best to begin with a brief layman's overview of the qualities of a servant leader.

Servant Leadership

While the idea of servant leadership goes back at least two thousand years, the modern servant leadership movement was launched by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 with the publication of his classic essay, *The Servant as Leader*. It was in that essay that he coined the words “servant-leader” and “servant leadership.” Greenleaf said that “the servant-leader is servant first.” By that he meant that the desire to serve, the “servant’s heart,” is a fundamental characteristic of a servant-leader. It is not about being servile, it is about wanting to help others. It is about identifying and meeting the needs of colleagues and communities. According to Larry C. Spears, former president of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, these are the 10 most important characteristics of servant leaders (Spears et al., 2010, pp. 25-30):

Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the Growth of People, and Building Community.

The characteristics of servant leadership often occur naturally within many individuals, and like many natural tendencies, they can be enhanced through learning and practice. In looking at some excerpts from his various correspondence and from testimony from those who knew him, we will see that Marcellin Champagnat had many of these natural tendencies which allowed him to accomplish so much.

Listening and Empathy

He knew how to bring humor into a conversation to liven things up...he was never ill at ease among the Brothers... (Laurent, 1842, p. 3)

Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to **listening intently to others**. The servant leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one's own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader. Likewise, empathy represents the ability to create **a sense of connectedness** with others-- to get them on your wavelength and invite them to move with and toward you rather than away and against you. People with empathy can constantly pick up emotional cues. They can appreciate not only what people are saying, but also why they are saying it. This competency is about understanding other people and the ability "to read" situations well. It is the ability to hear and understand accurately the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others. The most successful servant leaders are those who have become **skilled empathetic listeners**.

So, how is Marcellin an empathetic listener? It is important to remember that Marcellin had suffered as a boy from the absence of any regular schooling and was determined to see that the opportunities for learning, which he did not have, were extended throughout rural France. He was deeply convinced of the importance of education. He set out to establish a system of primary schools in which rural children could receive a good elementary education—an education which he had no opportunity to receive-- and, at the same time, receive instruction in the Christian faith. Marcellin knew first-hand what deprivation the young people were experiencing...and shared his remembrances of this deprivation in his letter to Queen Marie-Amelie of France:

What I saw with my own eyes in that new post, with reference to the education of young people, reminded me of the difficulties I had experienced myself at their age, for lack of teachers. I therefore quickly carried out the project I already had in mind to establish an association of teaching brothers for the rural towns, very many of which, for lack of financial resources, cannot afford the Brothers of the Christian Schools.²

These same concerns were also shared with King Louis-Philippe:

...I learned to read and write only after making tremendous efforts, for lack of capable teachers. From that time on I understood the urgent necessity of having an institution which could, with less expense, provide for rural children the same good education which the Brothers of the Christian Schools provide for the poor in the cities.³

Marcellin also understood his Brothers. Take for example, Brother Sylvestre. Marcellin knew Brother Sylvestre “thoroughly and esteemed him highly for his frankness and docility” and defended him when the older members of the community alleged that Sylvestre’s “only thought was to enjoy himself... and upset the good order of the community.” The

infamous wheelbarrow incident apparently caused significant rumblings in the community. How did Marcellin respond to these Brothers who complained? He said:

I prefer to see him enjoy himself in that way than mope about bored. I can't see what harm his barrow escapade caused. You used to enjoy yourselves too when you were young... Instead of joining the young Brother in some harmless game or some diverting activities to help him pass the time, you leave him to himself; you are busy at study or talk over serious questions; are you surprised that he plays with the barrow? Please don't make a crime of it, still less abandon him to himself at the risk of souring his attitude to his work and his vocation. (Furet, 1989, pp. 270-271)

Brother Sylvestre, in his *Memoirs*, describes several examples of Marcellin's kindness towards him, in particular when he pardoned him of twelve hundred lines given to him by the Master of Novices:

During spiritual reading I made a noise while moving a statue on my desk. The Master of Novices, somewhat annoyed by my carelessness in the past, gave me not less than 1200 lines. I believed this penance to be completely unjust and went to ask Fr. Champagnat to let me off with it. When I got to his room, I told him in tears and in great detail why I had come to see him. After carefully listening to me he took a sheet of paper from his desk, dripped sealing wax on it and applied his seal. Then he wrote a single line on it, signed the sheet and gave it to me, telling me to be more careful. What did that line contain? Here it is word for word: 'Payment of 1200 lines'. (Green, 2007, pp. 91-92)

Marcellin's response reveals his **natural and intuitive understanding** of adolescence and of religious life. But this intuitive understanding was not only for Brother Sylvestre. According to Brother Jean-Baptiste, as soon as Marcellin noticed that a postulant was having

troubles settling in or had doubts about his vocation or was home-sick, he either sent for him or found an opportunity of being alone with him.

This might be by taking him as companion on a journey, by an outing with him or by inviting his help in some manual work. In any case, he never lost touch with him until he had reinforced his determination to persevere in his holy state...Marcellin had a variety of approaches and he used every possible means to banish temptations against vocation and to instill courage into those who were taking fright at the trials or troubles of religious life. He would make one promise to stay a few days longer, assuring him that if the dissatisfaction did not pass, he would let him leave. Another might be given a position of trust with the reminder that he was counting on him and was confident that he would not be let down in the slightest. Or it might be that he called on the 'waverer' to make a novena, with the promise, that, if his dispositions remained unchanged, there would be no obstacle afterwards to his departure. A young man might be advised to stay on to further his studies and while he was busy doing this, the Founder would skillfully inspire him with a taste for religious life and lead him to a decision to embrace it. (Furet, 1989, pp. 465-466)

Marcellin's empathic listening is all the more significant when it is seen in the context of the prevailing rigorism in moral theology, the expectations of religious life, and even of the pastoral practices of the times. For the rigorist, human nature was corrupt and valid forgiveness from God was difficult to obtain. Jesus Christ was looked upon as a severe and inscrutable Redeemer (Farrell, 1984, p. 4). Because of this, a large number of persons remained away from the Sacraments, especially in France, during the 17th and 18th centuries, or received them but seldom, under pretext of being too unworthy. Yet in the following testimony of Brother Callinique, we see Marcellin as a man of enormous empathy in the confessional. In his listening to the young novice, Marcellin was both firm and compassionate:

During my novitiate, I made a general confession of my whole life, as the Rule suggests. Nothing can describe the goodness of Father in the confessional. During my confession, he held me in his arms, as was his custom, and hugged me affectionately against his heart. He was truly the father of the prodigal, welcoming his son...⁴

His empathy helped him “to connect” with people. To create a sense of connectedness with his Brothers, Marcellin took the time to get to know them and understand them. To build this connectedness, Marcellin made sure that he was “in touch” with his Brothers.

It is interesting to note that the Rule of 1837 required all the Brothers to write to the Superior “every four months.” (Rules, 1837). Clearly, this was one way Marcellin got to know his Brothers. It is also because of this rule that we have several letters from Marcellin, responding to letters from his Brothers. Many of these letters reveal Marcellin’s empathetic qualities, especially his ability to listen attentively to others. To Brother Barthélemy, Marcellin writes:

I was very glad to hear from you and to know that you are in good health. I also know that you have many children in your school; you will consequently have many copies of your virtues, because the children will model themselves on you, and will certainly follow your example.⁵

In another letter, Marcellin is able to hear and understand Barthélemy’s thoughts, feelings, and concerns:

I am very well aware of all the problems which all the illnesses of your co-workers can create for you. Take good care of yourself, so that you can carry out your difficult duties well...Be brave, dear friend; think how precious your occupation is in the eyes of God. Great saints and great men were happy to have a task which Jesus and Mary value so highly. Let these little children come to me, for heaven belongs to them.⁶

Bro. Denis, superior of the community in St-Didier-sur-Rochefort, had no doubt written to Marcellin for New Year's and shared some possible personal problems. Since we do not have Denis' letter to Marcellin, we don't know for sure what those problems were. We do, however, have Marcellin's response to Denis:

If you want me to continue to admonish you for your failing, good friend, you must not consider my admonitions so strange... You speak about your desire to go to the mission of Polynesia. My dear friend, cultivate that desire, for I believe it comes from God; I believe you also have graces and talents suitable for that work. God doubtless has plans for you...⁷

It would appear that Denis is unhappy where he is and must have mentioned that he would like to go to the missions. Marcellin understood a "geographical change" would not really address what is bothering Denis. We see Marcellin as clear, direct, and yet compassionate with Denis.

Marcellin had the ability to pick up the emotional cues of others. He was able to appreciate not only what people were saying to him, but also why they are saying it. This is seen in a brief excerpt from one of his letters to Brother François, who, according to Bro. Avit (1884, p. 251), "asked to be relieved of the burdens of government:"

Your position at the Hermitage is perhaps not so enviable as some might think. What could you do about it anyway? You did not go looking for that position. Just try to do your duty well and God will do what you cannot⁸

Being empathetic is also about understanding other people and the ability "to read" situations well. We see this in Marcellin's letter to his sister-in-law after he learned of the death of his brother, Jean-Barthélemy, his last surviving sibling. He relates to his sister-in-law through their shared grief:

My dear sister-in-law, he for whom you weep, and for whom I weep myself, if he has not left you many possessions, has left you and his children the example of a truly Christian life, and it is for that reason I like to remember that he was my brother...I never once go up to the altar without thinking of him. Will we be long delayed in following him to the grave?⁹

Marcellin was a man who felt things deeply and profoundly – a man of the ‘gut,’ a man who suffered, who wrestled with his own emotions and, as we saw earlier in this paper, his limitations. This ability to feel things profoundly made him extraordinarily empathetic. Clearly, Marcellin was an empathetic, yet passionate, man: he had a passion for his God, a passion for the people close to him, and a passion for his cause.

Marcellin’s empathy is also evident in his letter to his nephew, Brother Théodoret. It was written eight months after Marcellin’s brother, and Théodoret’s father (Jean-Barthélemy), had died. We could only imagine the anxiety and sadness that Théodoret was experiencing. In this excerpt, we see Marcellin assuring Théodoret that all is well with the surviving members of his family:

Your little brother is in La Grange-Payre, very happy, and Jean-Pierre is feeling better. The rest of your family is also in good health.¹⁰

As we have seen, empathy is the ability to hear and understand accurately the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others. This ability is a necessary skill of a master spiritual director. This empathy is never so clear as in Marcellin’s letters to his Brothers. To an unnamed brother, Marcellin writes:

The good fortune of being a child of Mary certainly demands some struggle and sacrifices. Besides what we can say to Jesus, what do we not have the right to say to Mary: why should I be the first to have invoked you; more than that, to have been your child.¹¹

He understands being a good religious “demands struggles and sacrifices.”

To Brother Basin, he writes:

You should never doubt my attachment to you. I never once go to the holy altar without praying for you. God, my dear child, will grant you the perseverance on which your sanctification depends.¹²

Like Bro. Basin, Bro. Avit had just made his first profession five months previously and apparently has some questions on how to nurture and support the vows, in particular, “the very loveable virtue (chastity).” Marcellin understands this when he writes:

...Thinking of the death and passion of Jesus Christ is an excellent way to repel any thoughts foreign to and against the very lovable virtue. Another very good way to acquire the religious virtues is, as you know, dear friend, the practice of the holy presence of God, recommended by all the masters of the spiritual life. If it is only recommended for people in the world, it is obligatory for religious. So, try it out for the rest of this Lent.¹³

Marcellin’s letter to Brother Anaclet, like the ones to Brother Basin and Brother Avit, is evidently a reply to one of those letters which a Brother had to send to the superior every four months (Rule, 1837, ch.VII, parag. 2). It shows Marcellin’s deep concern for Anaclet:

May Jesus and Mary always be the sum-total of your resources. They are well acquainted with your name and your needs. None the less, do not stop telling them about them, nor counting on their powerful help... You should have no doubt how much I wish that God will bless you and everything you do, and that because of you he will bless the establishment where you are and all the brothers with you.¹⁴

Like the preceding letters to his Brothers (Sester, 1991, *Letters* PS 244, 247, 248), the excerpt from the following letter to Brother Marie-Laurent deals with spiritual direction matters. But this letter concerns a painful situation which Marcellin is trying to assist Marie-Laurent to resolve (Sester, 1991, p. 449). He shows him his affection by means of the prayers he promises him, and we also see that Marie-Laurent's situation stirred Marcellin's compassion:

Your letter, my very dear friend, greatly aroused my compassion. Since then I never approach the holy altar without recommending you to him in whom we never hope in vain, who can help us overcome the greatest obstacles. Never despair of your salvation; it is in good hands: Mary, isn't Mary your refuge and your good mother? The greater your needs are, the more she wants to rush to help you.¹⁵

Marcellin had the ability to weigh the situation and the psychological state of the person involved. A letter to Brother Apollinaire, a twenty-three-year-old, just about to take his brevet examination, and suddenly stricken with illness, is a good example of this skill:

What upsets me most is that I have been told you are unwell. You must not, my dear friend, get so sick as not to be able to recover. Were you in the army, they would grant you time to get well again. Ask permission of Fr Mazelier and come here to regain your health. If you do not get your brevet in the month of September, you will get it later. We do not want to bury you just yet; you have not done enough so far for heaven.¹⁶

Marcellin knows Apollinaire and he knows that he must be extremely disappointed and frustrated at not being able to take his brevet examination. Marcellin assures him that his health is more important than his brevet (which was necessary to have in order to avoid military conscription and to teach)...and he adds a little touch of humor (*"We do*

not want to bury you just yet; you have not done enough so far for heaven.”) to “soften” the disappointment that Apollinaire must have been feeling.

Another example of Marcellin’s empathetic ability can be seen in his letter to Brother Cassien. We know that Louis Chomat and Césaire Fayol opened a school in Sorbiers, their hometown, in 1812, and ran it until both of them entered the Little Brothers of Mary in 1832. At that time, the Institute took it over. For almost ten years, Marcellin acted as a spiritual director to these men. The two teachers, henceforth Brother Cassien and Brother Arsène, stayed at the school in Sorbiers, and two other Brothers were sent to help them. Apparently, from that moment on, Brother Cassien had to endure a long interior crisis; first, he found that his confrères were not good enough religious, and then he himself began to question his vocation to the religious life. It was while in this frame of mind that he wrote to Marcellin, blaming everyone around him for his difficulties. Marcellin replies with a very touching and sympathetic letter. Here is an excerpt of that letter:

My dear Brother Cassien, **I will not hide from you the pain your attitude causes me**, since I simply cannot understand it. I do not believe, dear friend, that I have failed you in any way: I took careful note of the objections you felt obliged to raise with me, and I certainly did not think I was making fun of you by giving you the two brothers we did. You yourself were pleased with them... When Brother Denis’ negative attitude upset you, did I not go there right away to change him? ...So then, dear brother, what have you got to be upset about? If the members of the Society of Mary are too imperfect to serve as models for you, dear Cassien, then look at her who can be the model of the perfect and the imperfect and who loves them all: the perfect because they practice virtue and lead others to do good, especially in community; and the imperfect because it is especially for their sake that Mary was raised to the sublime dignity of Mother of God.¹⁷

Marcellin, knowing well the Brother involved, was able “**to assess**” the situation and respond appropriately.

According to Father Jean Jantin, a Marist Father,

Father Champagnat had a rare talent for detecting all the little failings of his Brothers and **giving them appropriate advice**. One day, when a certain young Brother asked his permission to receive Communion (which was required by the canon law of the time), Father willingly gave it, but he profited by the occasion to remind him of the disadvantage of walking around while gazing up at the sky... he had seen him step inadvertently right into a pile of mortar. Another time, he asked him if the currants were ripe; he had seen him eating some while walking along one of the paths. These remarks, given with real fatherly goodness, but armed with a sharp and penetrating little point, left salutary and unforgettable memories.¹⁸

Marcellin knew how to “**read people,**” how to relate to them in a non-threatening but firm way.

Healing

The **healing of relationships** is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one’s self and one’s relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact. In his essay, *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf (1977/2002) writes,

There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and

led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share. (p. 50)

Possibly from his own father's example, Marcellin had learned how to come to know people closely, how to mix with them, how to show concern, how to help heal relationships. Marcellin's natural tendency was to be relational. In support of this view, it is interesting to note that Brother Sylvestre says that Marcellin's many journeys to visit his parishioners in the remote hamlets,

...were not solely to visit the sick, but also to **re-establish contact with the families, to reconcile their enemies, to help the poor, to console the afflicted** and to bring back to their duties the people who had distanced themselves and who no longer spoke charitably of their priest. He had a natural gift for gaining confidence and correcting without ever hurting. (Green 2007, p. 34)

Champagnat's relationship with Brother Dominique must have been a very interesting one. Brother Dominique Exquis, born in 1803, had entered at Lavalla in 1824 and took vows during 1826. He made his perpetual vows in 1837. In 1832 he was Director at Chavanay; in 1834 he was at Charlieu with Br. Liguori as Director. From 1837-1844 he was Director at Charlieu; from 1844-50 at Pélussin, and then at Monsols. In 1857, he opened the school at Blanzay; there he died on 12th December 1865 (Farrell, 1984, p. 187). Yet, immediately after his novitiate, around October-November 1826,

when Father Courveille, after giving our Founder so much trouble, left him to go to Saint-Antoine to found what he called a more austere congregation, Bro. Dominique was one of those who let themselves be won over and followed him. But this brother did not wait for Father Courveille's total fiasco before returning to the Hermitage. (Costa & Lessard, 1985, III, 861, 8)

Marcellin must have been saddened to see a small number of his Brothers, including Brother Dominique whom he valued so highly, desert the Hermitage to go and join Courveille's new congregation. It was not long before Dominique returned. According to Bro. Théodose, when Bro. Dominique returned from Saint-Antoine, he

went to see Father Champagnat at the Hermitage and asked to be readmitted. Father Champagnat pushed him toward the dining room: 'Yes, come in,' he told him, smiling as if to say, 'Poor prodigal! Yes, you may come back in. You were deceived; you acted rashly; well, come back in, and let that be the end of it. (Coste & Lessard, 1985, III, doc 861.8)

Two of Marcellin's letters to Brother Dominique still remain. According to what we can surmise, Dominique apparently was a good teacher and able administrator, but it seems that he was "tough" on his Brothers. Nevertheless, Marcellin and his Council must have "credited him with a sound religious spirit, since they entrusted to him the leadership of several communities and schools" (Farrell, 1984, p. 187).

In 1834, the thirty-one-year-old Dominique seems to be having difficulties in the community. Was it a preoccupation with personal achievement, a continuation of his desire to live a more austere life, or some other reason, we will never know, but what we do have is Marcellin's response to him. In it, Marcellin, without losing his calm, offers encouragement and sound advice...things that could only be offered by someone who knows Dominique and his personality well:

...A little more humility and obedience would not hurt your situation any. If Brother Ligouri had told you that all the brothers had congratulated him for having you as his co-worker, would you have been so naive as to believe him? Dear Dominique, **it is impossible for us to please everyone, no matter how we act... I really do feel for you in your difficulties.** God has

sufficient revenue to repay you; you will lose nothing with him, not even the interest; I guarantee it.¹⁹

Four years later, we see Marcellin's responding to another letter from Dominique, apparently filled with complaints:

As for you, dear friend, we will always be ready to please you and even to obey you. Show us a task at which you can remain constant and content, and we will entrust it to you right away. It is a very sad illness, to be happy only in places where one is not. It is also a terrible mistake to go looking for any other way to do good than the one which has been entrusted to us.²⁰

Marcellin had the ability to handle difficult individuals and tense situations with diplomacy and tact. He was **able to come face-to-face with a conflict rather than trying to avoid it and was able to de-escalate the bad feelings which could be festering.** As we see, Marcellin's response is clear and straightforward—and given what we can surmise about Dominique's personality, it is a type of response that Dominique himself would appreciate. Marcellin knows Dominique well and is concerned for him and his state of mind which would lead to continuous complaints. He recognizes Dominique's situation, but tries to make him listen to reason. It was the person, the Brother himself, about whom Marcellin was most concerned. His stance with his Brothers (and with others) was **relational**.

Awareness and Self Awareness

For us who were at the beginnings, we are like the rough stones that are thrown into the foundations; you don't use polished stones for that.²¹

General **awareness, and especially self-awareness,** strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving

ethics, power, and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf (1977/2002) observed:

Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity. (p. 41)

Some people are not prepared to face the truth about themselves. When a person knows who he is, he may have to change; and some individuals just do not want to change because changing demands effort! Self-awareness requires honesty and courage ... to get in touch with what we are thinking and feeling and to face the truth about ourselves.

Marcellin, like many holy people, often believed he fell short of his ideals. We have a glimpse of this because he himself called attention to his faults—in his pride and self-love. In 1812, while in the minor seminary at Verrières, Marcellin writes in one of his personal resolutions:

Holy virgin...I turn primarily to you; even though I am your unworthy servant, ask the adorable Heart of Jesus to give me the grace to know myself, and once I know myself, to fight and to overcome my self-love and pride... (Marist Notebooks, 1990, pp. 75-76)

Marcellin was keenly aware that his own “offenses” were just as “heinous” as those of others. He, in fact, concerned himself with his own sinfulness and “lamented” them, and through these lamentations took efforts to correct them.

In a very real way, Marcellin’s awareness of his own lapses and failures encouraged him not to be so judgmental of others.

This is seen in one of his early resolutions during his seminary years:

I will talk with all my fellow-students without exception, no matter how repugnant I find some of them, since I recognize now that it is only pride that keeps me from doing so... Why do I despise them? Because of my talents? I am the last in my class. Because of my virtue? I am very proud. Because of the beauty of my body? God made it, and in any case, it's badly enough put together, and I am nothing but a pinch of dust. (Sester, 1990, pp. 77-79)

This self-awareness was a key part of Marcellin's personality and was no doubt helpful in his future relationships with the many Brothers of the Institute whom he helped to form. His genuine, deep affection for his "Little Brothers of Mary" was evident in the paternal greetings which begin so many of his letters to the Brothers---"My very dear brother... My dear friend... My dear child..." The Brothers saw Marcellin's love and concern for them, and Marcellin was able to show this care and concern for them in all their struggles because he too struggled in his life. He understood their struggles.

In the testimonies of the witnesses for the beatification of Marcellin, Brother Aidan stated,

It was especially in the confessional that his (Marcellin's) zeal shone forth. His advice was always practical and adapted to each one's needs. There, one always found the representative of the divine Master...the loving doctor who knew how to pour on oil and balm, to restore to the discouraged or wounded soul its confidence, peace, and happiness. We could feel that the Father had drawn his loving words not only from doctrine, but especially from the heart of the Master²²

His years of seminary study obviously had been difficult for Marcellin, but his confidence in God adhered to his natural "toughness"

and self-awareness, and these traits enabled him to persevere. He modeled this resoluteness and determination for his Brothers, but he also gave great witness to the idea that to know oneself well is a pathway to know God's will.

Marcellin knew his inner resources, his abilities, and limits---and he was willing and open to receive feedback and new perspectives about himself. By looking at his academic marks at the end of 1813, it is obvious that he had not improved scholastically, but his other marks (conduct, character, study) indicate an improvement in general attitude--an apparent early weakness which was no doubt pointed out by his seminary instructors.

The better a person understands himself, the better he can accept or change who he is. Being in the dark about oneself could lead an individual to get caught up in his own internal struggles and allow outside forces to mold and shape him. The clarity with which a person understands himself determines that person's capability to chart his own destiny and realize his potential.

Marcellin was motivated by a desire for continuous learning and self-development and had the ability to target areas for personal change for the greater glory of his God. This competency, also known as "achievement orientation," shows a concern for a personal need to improve oneself. At the time of his death in 1840, Marcellin had a personal library consisting of approximately fifty-three books (Lanfrey, 2008). Many of his books, such as Liguori's *Théologie morale*, Boudon's *Dieu seul*, Surin's *Fondements de la vie spirituelle*, and Saint Francis de Salles' *Introduction à la vie dévote* gave guidance to him on how he should live his life for Christ. In his seminary years, the area which Marcellin focused on to improve was his pride. Once again, his resolutions give clear example of the steps he felt he would need to take for him to address this issue. At different times during his seminary days, Marcellin promised that he would:

...never...go back to the tavern without necessity...avoid bad companions and, in a word, not to do anything which would go against my serving you... (He promised) to give good example; to lead others, as far as I can, to practice virtue; to instruct others in your divine teachings...Talk with all my fellow-students without exception, no matter how repugnant I find some of them, since I recognize now that it is only pride that keeps me from doing so... (Sester, 1990, pp. 73-77)

In his resolutions for 1815, he revealed a generous perseverance to act where and when he thought God wanted him to and a greater emphasis on study and prayer. He was giving attention to the fault of telling lies and engaging in slander, and he strongly emphasized charity toward neighbor (both in the seminary and back in Marlies during his vacation).

Every time my evening examen makes me aware that I have criticized anyone," Marcellin wrote, "I will deprive myself of breakfast. ...Every time I become aware that I have been guilty of a lie or any exaggeration, I will say the Miserere to ask God's pardon. (Sester, 1990, pp. 89-91)

Preparations for the priesthood led him to "deprivation of self, renunciation, life of prayer, of rule, of study..." and to achieve the goals he set for himself, he appealed strongly to the "Holy Virgin," his Good Mother, since he was well aware of his weaknesses.

The desire to learn more about himself and thus do God's will led him once again to seek the advice of his former superior at the major seminary in Lyon, Father Philibert Gardette. In a letter from May of 1827, we see Marcellin writing to Gardette, somewhat of a "father figure," for "some advice and consolation"²³, concerning the present situation at the Hermitage.

In 1827, the Institute was only ten years old and its foundations were still rather weak. When the Brothers were sent out to the schools, they were often still very young and not well trained. Marcellin, therefore, felt it necessary to continue their formation at their communities and at their apostolate, which required him to visit them frequently. At the same time, while Marcellin did have a Brother to serve as novice director, he wished to have some priests (preferably Marist in inclination) to assist with the spiritual formation of the young men at the Hermitage and with the financial administration of the Institute. At this point in the history of the Institute, Courveille and Terrailon had left Marcellin, and he had to deal with all the issues by himself. Marcellin knew that he simply could not “do all that unless I have someone to share the work”. He sought both consolation and advice.

We also have a glimpse of how Marcellin saw himself some fifteen years after leaving the seminary. While it is not a ‘direct’ self-assessment, Marcellin gives some insights into what type of priest should come to the Hermitage to assist him in his work with the Brothers. In a letter to Archbishop de Pins during Lent of 1835, Marcellin writes,

...what we still need is someone **who can supervise, animate, and direct everything**, who can meet and deal with those who come to the house; someone who loves, who realizes the importance and benefits of such a position, a director who is **pious, enlightened, experienced, prudent, firm, and constant.** ²⁴

Here, Marcellin paints a portrait of the type of person needed to assist the Brothers at the Hermitage...and unknowingly Marcellin has painted a self-portrait! Marcellin was “pious, enlightened, experienced, prudent, firm, and constant” as well as “someone who loves.”

Persuasion

Servant leaders use **persuasion** – rather than their authority – to encourage people to act. This element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. Servant leaders aim to build consensus in groups, so that everyone supports decisions.

Marcellin was aware of whom he needed “to see” or “to meet” to influence a particular situation in order to accomplish his goals. He was **able to address both ecclesial as well as civil authorities**. Let us examine a few of these instances which reveal Marcellin’s ability to persuade.

In order to get a priest to assist him at the Hermitage with the formation of the Brothers, he writes to Father Philibert Gardette, his superior at the major seminary and his spiritual counselor:

I simply cannot take care of everything... **If it is as important as everyone agrees it is, for young people to have a good religious formation, it is therefore equally important, not only that those who give them that formation receive a good formation themselves,** but also that they not be left to their own devices once they are sent out.²⁵

To Father Simon Cattet, Vicar General in charge of religious congregations, he writes:

...I would need to visit our establishments at least every two months, to see if everything is on a solid footing; if any of our brothers has become involved in a dangerous relationship so I can do something about it at the outset; if cleanliness and the Rule are being observed; if the children are making progress, especially in

the area of piety; to make sure, in a word, that the brothers are not losing their religious spirit.²⁶

To Father Barou, Vicar General in charge of priest appointments for the Diocese of Lyon, Marcellin asks for a priest by name: “...*Father Séon would be suitable from many points of view. He would not only not ask for anything, but he has told me that he would even give us his patrimony of 20,000 francs.*”²⁷

Marcellin also explains the matter to Archbishop De Pins, administrator of the Lyon Diocese and a generous benefactor of Marcellin’s who could possibly affect a priest’s appointment to the Hermitage.²⁸

He also **addresses other ecclesial authorities when he deems it appropriate and necessary.** To Monseigneur Bénigne Troussset d’Hericourt, Bishop of Autun, Marcellin writes,

I can only rejoice in your ongoing good will toward the Society of Mary and express to you once again our deep and respectful gratitude. I hope that the holy union which Your Grandeur wants to contract in the heart of our Good Mother with the society of her brothers and her children, will be entirely for her glory and for the salvation of souls. You wish to know the basis of the arrangement which ought to cement and assure this union. I am completely in agreement: it is good for both sides to come to an understanding in advance on the essential conditions, so that when we meet, we will have only the details to work out.²⁹

Marcellin also makes sure to send his greetings to the soon-to-be-elevated Cardinal Archbishop, Monseigneur le Cardinal Hughes Robert Jean Charles de Latour D’Auvergne, Bishop of Arras, in Sommes, and asks him to use his influence to secure legal recognition for the Marist Brothers:

The Superior of the Little Brothers of Mary, established at N-D de l’Hermitage near St-Chamond (Loire), dares to throw himself at

the feet of Your Eminence to beg you to accept the homage of his profound respect and his very humble congratulations for the new dignity which the Sovereign Pontiff has just conferred on your merits and virtues. We rejoiced heartily, with all of France and all of Christianity, to see such a holy prelate and such a zealous and charitable pontiff become one of the chief pastors of the universal Church... I also dare to beg you to be good enough to extend the salutary influence of your high and powerful protection to the entire society of the Brothers of Mary.... We have no doubt that a simple recommendation on your part would be of the greatest assistance to us in the presence of His Majesty.³⁰

This same rationale can be seen in his letter to Bishop De Bonald of Le Puy who had just been named Archbishop of Lyon on 4th December 1839. As soon as Marcellin learned of De Bonald's appointment, he rushed to compose a letter to send him his respects. Since the Archbishop was in Paris at this time, it was a good occasion to update him on the proceedings in view of obtaining the Institute's legal authorization and to ask him to use his influence to obtain what was needed:

The Superior of the Little Brothers of Mary dares to anticipate the happy moment which will give you to our wishes and our desires, to offer Your Grandeur the homage of his profound respect and his most humble felicitations... For eight years now we have been requesting, without having been able to obtain it, the benefit of a royal ordinance which, by regularizing our existence, would shield our brothers from conscription. How fortunate we would consider ourselves, My Lord, if we could owe this favor, so precious and so long desired, to your benevolence and your powerful influence...³¹

We see Marcellin also addressing the civil or governmental authorities who have the decision-making powers which could affect Marcellin and his Brothers. The following are but a few examples:

To Monsieur Alexandre Denis Devaux de Pleyne, Mayor at Bourg-Argental, Marcellin, who no doubt is responding to a letter from the mayor asking him to reduce the salary of the three Brothers at Bourg-Argental, writes,

I leave it to your wisdom and the goodness of your heart to judge whether it would not be cruel to reduce that amount. I will show your letter to the Prefect, who promised me that he would take an interest in the poor towns.³²

He uses some of his political acuity when he mentions to Devaux that he will show his “letter to the Prefect,” apparently with the hope of placing some pressure on Devaux.

To Monsieur Jean François Preynat, Mayor of Sorbiers, Marcellin informs him that if the schoolhouse is not renewed or if another house is not obtained, the Brothers will not be in Sorbiers:

Having learned that you did not renew the lease on the house where your brothers taught last year, and knowing also that you have not begun to build another one, I can foresee that All Saints will come and nothing will have been done. I would be very pleased to know if you have some other resort somewhere else; if not, the brothers cannot under any circumstances operate the town school in their own quarters, because they are too small and unhealthy.³³

In his letter to Monsieur Jean Baptiste Antoine Merlat, Mayor of Sympohorien-le-Chateau, who apparently was looking for some excuse to have the Brothers leave the town, Marcellin addresses him with respect and “political savvy”, and states, “*Knowing your honesty, I have every confidence that you will act wisely, as usual, in what concerns your school*”³⁴

Marcellin also wanted to make clear to the King Louis Philippe

that the Marist Brothers are loyal subjects and good citizens who hope to do what is “in the best interests of my fellow citizens:”

I am therefore filled, Sire, with the pleasant hope that this undertaking, begun solely in the best interests of my fellow citizens, will be approved by Your Majesty, who is always ready to encourage what is useful. The Brothers of Mary... will owe you their eternal gratitude and will join me in saying forever that we are, Sire, Your Majesty's most humble, most obedient, and most faithful subjects.³⁵

Marcellin followed up this letter to the King with a letter to the Queen. He hoped to influence Queen Marie-Amelie to urge her husband, King Louis-Philippe, to approve the legal authorization of the Institute. Marcellin's hope was that a wife would have more sway on her husband than anyone else:

The purpose of this letter is to beg Your Majesty to please urge His Majesty Louis-Philippe to approve by ordinance the authorization which his council was willing to grant to the society of the Marist Brothers, by approving their statutes, as contained in the General Manual of Primary Instruction, N°6, for the month of April 1834.³⁶

Marcellin recognized the need to win over governmental deputies and ministers as well. We see this in his letter to the Minister of Public Instruction, Mr. Nicolas De Salvandy. He attempts to do this by “tapping into” the Minister's “love for everything concerned with the public welfare” and reminding him of the Society of Mary's attempt to “bring French civilization” to other parts of the world:

Your love for everything concerned with the public welfare, which is so well known, and the protection you extend to those who want to further it, lead me to believe that you will understand the liberty I am taking in reminding you of the request of the Little Brothers of Mary, by pointing out to you the main reasons

for prompt action on it...Bishop Pompallier, to whom the august royal family has deigned to show its kindness and whom it has honored with the most flattering marks of its goodwill, and who left more than a year ago to bring French civilization and French beliefs to the many islands of Western Oceania, has just reached his destination safely.³⁷

Yet, it is important to note here that while Marcellin knew with whom he needed to contact, he did have a certain naïveté when it came to understand why the legal approbation of the Institute was not progressing in 1838. In political circles, animosity against the Church and the clergy had certainly not died out altogether. Around 1837, while Catholics strengthened their positions, a certain uneasiness began to manifest itself. The 'legitimists' feared a reconciliation between the Church and the ruling dynasty. The liberals recalled the dark years of the alliance between Throne and Altar. The university people felt their positions were threatened.

Added to this milieu was the above mentioned De Salvandy, the Minister of Public Instruction, who might have feared losing his ministerial position in the late 1830's. The government, of which he was a leading member, was blamed for producing "a spectacle of impotence," of having no well-defined program, and of playing politics with the priests and the king. Since his ministry put him in the thick of Church-State relations, De Salvandy's behavior was certainly watched closely by the opposition, who were particularly ticklish on this point. Therefore, the path down which Marcellin wanted to lead him must have seemed to him filled with political ambushes, and his character was more inclined to be obliging when it furthered his own interests, rather than generous in following his political convictions regardless of the cost. Still, that having been said, Marcellin knew De Salvandy was a person who needed to be won over.

And in his letter to Mr. Jean-Jacques Baude, a deputy in the Ministry in Paris, we see Marcellin asking for him to continue using whatever

influence he has to assist the Institute in achieving its legal approbation, which now does not seem likely:

...as for me, Mr. Deputy, I have made my decision: the great influence you possess, the special kindness with which you have always welcomed me, as well as the brother I sent you, and your interest in my establishment, give me sufficient guarantee of success...³⁸

Clearly, Marcellin understood whom he needed to communicate with if he wished to attain his goals.

Conceptualization, Foresight, and Stewardship

Conceptualization relates to the ability to “**dream great dreams,**” so that a leader can look beyond day-to-day realities to the bigger picture. The leader who wishes to also be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant leader **to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future.** It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind and calls the leader to trust his/her intuition.

Peter Block (1993)—author of **Stewardship and The Empowered Manager**—has defined stewardship as “holding something in trust for another” (1993, p. xx). Robert Greenleaf’s view of all institutions was one in which everyone played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust **for the greater good of society.** Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control.

Marcellin's competencies in these areas are apparent in the early years of his ministry as a priest in Lavalla:

How many miles have I trudged through these mountains, how many shirts have I soaked with sweat! If it were all gathered together in that valley, I think there would be enough to take a bath...I may have perspired indeed in my treks, but I have the delightful consolation of having always arrived, with God's help, in time to comfort the dying with the rites of the Church. Today, nothing consoles me more! (Furet, 1989, p. 56).

It is also apparent in the well-known "**Montagne event.**" As we know, on Monday, October 28, 1816, an event took place that convinced Marcellin **he must immediately set about the founding of a teaching congregation.** He had been called to a carpenter's home in Les Palais, a hamlet beyond Le Bessat where a teenager, was lying gravely ill. Marcellin was horrified to discover that this teenager did not know the basic tenets of the Catholic faith, nor even of the existence of God. Marcellin spent hours trying to instruct him in the basic Christian precepts, heard his confession, and prepared him to die. Marcellin then left to minister to another sick person in a nearby house, and when he returned, he found that the boy had died. Marcellin could not help reflecting on the religious and educational situation of France in the wake of the Revolution and the Empire. Deciding he had no time to waste, Marcellin went to Jean-Marie Granjon to ask him to become the first member of a community of teaching Brothers (Furet, 1989, pp. 58-59). In many ways, Marcellin acted as a "change catalyst"... he recognized the need for change and called attention to this need for change. From this landmark event forward, we can see this orientation "to serve" in some of Marcellin's correspondence.

In his letter to Mother Saint Joseph, Superior of the Marist Sisters, Marcellin states that he will be sending three girls to her to begin their formation. While we do not know how Marcellin met them, we do know that he worked steadily for the entire Society of Mary: for the Fathers

(Furet, 1989, p. 199) and for the Sisters, to whom he sent about ten girls (Coste, et al., 1985).

I am sending you the three girls about whom I spoke to you, from St. Laurent d'Agny. If they cannot bring you as much wealth as they would like, they at least have enough good will to do whatever you may demand of them. I told them that if they did not come to you with perfect self-renunciation, submission in the face of every trial, great openness of heart, a persevering spirit and a real desire to love God as Mary did, they should not go any further.³⁹

Marcellin was also attempting to respond to the various requests for Brothers. To Father Paul Benoit, the Director at the Grand Séminaire de Montpellier, Marcellin writes:

I plan to make a short trip to the south. I hope to have the opportunity to see you and speak with you about the establishment you request. It is true that we cannot supply brothers this year because of our lack of subjects, but your request is under consideration and we will try to accommodate you as soon as possible.⁴⁰

To Mister Marcellin Gerentet, Mayor of Saint-Rambert-sur-Loire, Marcellin writes:

Believe me, Mister Mayor, I would be very pleased to be able to back up your zeal for the education of the young people of your town, and I will be delighted to see a school of our brothers established in St-Rambert, because over and above the success it cannot fail to have under your benevolent protection, this establishment would suit our needs perfectly, since it would centralize the others we already have in that area. So, we will do all we can as soon as possible to comply with your desires and show you how grateful we are for the confidence which you have so kindly shown to our house.⁴¹

But, as Marcellin had written to Bro. François (PS197), it was simply not possible to open any new schools in 1838 besides La Grange-Payre and St-Pol-en-Artois. While the Brothers did not take charge of the school in St-Rambert until 1855, it is important to note Marcellin's hope and intention of being of service to these towns and parishes.

This is also seen in Marcellin's letter to Father Julien Deschal, Curé of Virelade in Gironde:

We were very glad to receive the important letter you did us the honor to write us and in which you inform us of the kindly attitude of His Lordship the Archbishop of Bordeaux towards our society. **We will do all we can to make ourselves useful to his important diocese** when Providence provides us with an opportunity to make establishments there.⁴²

Yet, in view of the lack of Brothers to fill all the requests, it is not possible for Marcellin to satisfy this request at this time. However, the obvious interest expressed in Marcellin's letter will bring Father Deschal back again the following month (cf. PS 284), and Marcellin's intention "to be of service" is again noted.

Despite all our good will, we are obliged to hold to what we said in the last letter we sent you. It is impossible for us, for the moment, to specify a time when we will be able to give you some of our brothers. The great number of requests which we have to fill before yours, will use up the number of subjects we receive for the next several years. Let us hope, none the less, that Providence will multiply them according to our needs. It is really very painful for us not to be able to contribute immediately to your zeal for the instruction of your dear children.⁴³

As we have seen, many of Marcellin's letters at this time were letters to various people in important positions (such as Mayors, Parish

Priests, Bishops) in which he had to reluctantly give a negative reply to their requests for new schools—practically always because of unsuitable lodgings being obtainable for the Brothers and/or the lack of Brothers ready for the apostolate. Yet, it is clear that Marcellin wishes to be of service. For instance, one such letter was written to the Superior of the Jesuits at La Louvesc on 21st March 1837:

We are very interested in establishing our brothers in La Louvesc. How pleased we would be to see our subjects near the tomb of St. Régis, working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, under the direction of the esteemed Jesuit Fathers. It is very upsetting to us that we cannot fill your request. Your establishment is already entered in our register, and **we are very determined to do all we can to serve you as soon as possible.**⁴⁴

Marcellin's orientation "to serve others" was also available for "nontraditional" apostolates. Just as he is preparing to fulfill the expectations of the city of St-Etienne, which is counting on Brothers for its Institute for Deaf-Mutes, Marcellin had received a similar request from Father Henri Pradier of Le Puy. It is easy to understand why he does not hesitate to answer enthusiastically and positively, but it does not mean that he thinks he can very readily satisfy both requests:

We were pleased to receive your proposal to send two of our brothers to direct an establishment for deaf-mutes in your city. **It fits perfectly into the plan of our institution, which is totally dedicated to the education of children of whatever condition.**⁴⁵

This orientation is also seen in Marcellin's letter to Bishop Devie of the Diocese of Belley. After the two Revolutions (1789...) and a continental war, many children in the countryside were without direction and were, in a sense, like "wandering bandits" or "functional orphans." Some social theorists of the time believed that "farm schools" were a possible answer to

this problem. Bishop Devie encouraged these different agricultural/farm schools which were set up at various times in the department of the Ain, and he himself even tried a few experiments of this type, at considerable expense⁴⁶. He had asked Marcellin to take over one of these schools, or model farms, which he wanted to start in Bresse. Marcellin tells Devie:

I am more and more attracted to this good work, which, upon close examination, does not diverge from my aim, since it is primarily concerned with the education of the poor⁴⁷

Even though he will ultimately not be able to satisfy the request, Marcellin still shows very clearly that this type of apostolate fits perfectly into his conception of the vocation of the Little Brother of Mary—to be of service for the Christian education of youth, “of whatever condition.”

Another example of this “service orientation” is seen in the last letter of Marcellin’s that exists. It is a letter to Monsieur Pierre Bernard Hugony, Curé à Prés-Saint-Gervais, Paris, dated the 3rd of May 1840. In it, we get a glimpse of Marcellin’s reaction in the face of the moral poverty which was probably described in Hugony’s original letter to him. At the end of his life, Marcellin recognizes another type of need among young people (the working youth of a Parisian suburb) and would like his Institute to be of service. He says to Hugony:

The needs of your parish are extremely great; the description you gave us of them struck and afflicted us very deeply, but in spite of all the good will we may have to further your zeal, we find it impossible to do so at the present moment... May God open to your zeal sufficient resources for the accomplishment of such an important and necessary work, and also give us the means to further your pious project!⁴⁸

However, circumstances did not permit Marcellin nor the Brothers to go to help out in this project of Monsieur Hugony, but in his closing

lines, Marcellin does seem to hint that this type of “pious project” may fit into the aim of the Institute: to be of service to the marginalized youth wherever they may be.

Commitment to the Growth of People and Building Community

His (Marcellin’s) lessons and example will not be lost; we shall find them in the Brothers whom he has founded. (Jean Louis Duplay, in Sester, 1993)⁴⁹

Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions. As such, servant leaders are **committed to the personal and professional development of everyone involved in the mission**. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone and encouraging involvement in decision-making.

Developing & Influencing Others

This competency is about the ability **to foster the long-term learning or development of others**. Its focus is on the developmental intent and effect rather than on the formal role of teaching or training. Those individuals who do this well spend time helping people find **their own way through specific feedback**. They mentor others by recognizing their strengths. They also can impact others in order to support a particular aim. In Marcellin’s case, his aim was clear: to provide a Christian education to the poor youth of the towns.

Of the many images used to describe Marcellin, the one of “mentor” is extremely apt. He mentored his early Brothers so that they could one day assume leadership roles within the community. He mentions this in his 1835 letter to Archbishop De Pins: *“It is true that I have some*

brothers who help me with various tasks: a good master of novices, a capable brother to direct the brothers' class, another for the novices, and an economer..."⁵⁰

We also know that Marcellin **believed in developing his brothers**. In his Circular of 1840-02-04, (Sester, 1991, PS 318) it is clear that Marcellin has trained others to lead the annual conference:

Therefore, in conformity with our last circular, the conference will be held at...for the establishments of...and will be presided over by our Brother First Assistant, and in his absence by Brother...⁵¹

He advised and mentored François on how to be a leader and how to make decisions. One example of this is seen in Marcellin's letter of 10th January 1838 to François. Marcellin, who is on his way to Paris to attempt to gain legal authorization for the Institute and is aware of François' reluctance in assuming a leadership role in his absence, tells François:

Whenever you have a problem, after consulting God and our common Mother, consult Fr. Matricon. Tell him that I told you to consult him. Work things out with him and Fr. Terrailon, when you can. On Sundays, at the usual time, meet in the secretariat with Fr. Matricon and the usual brothers...⁵²

Marcellin modeled the type of decision-making he believed was necessary--Consultation with the priests at the Hermitage and "the usual Brothers." In his letter to Father Ferréol Douillet, we can see Marcellin's **decision-making process**, which he no doubt passed on to his Brothers:

The decision which I shared with you about our establishment in La Côte was in no way one I made all by myself. After **recommending the matter to the prayers** of all our brothers, and saying Mass for that intention, I consulted my confrères, our brothers, and all were of the opinion that we should not continue directing the school in La Côte except under the conditions

according to which it was established, and according to which we establish them everywhere else⁵³

Also important to note is that before the Rule of 1837 was promulgated, Marcellin sent it around to the senior Brothers **for consultation and for their comments on its content**, and according to Brother Marie-Jubin, Marcellin also sought the advice and opinions of some of the younger Brothers:

Asking for advice never embarrassed him. More than once he came to me, a young brother of twenty, which both surprised and edified me⁵⁴

Marcellin also spent time helping some of his Brothers “find their own way” through specific feedback. This was already seen in his two letters to Dominique (PS 049 & PS 234), his letter to Brother Cassien (PS 042), his letter to Brother Barthélemy (PS024), his letter to Brother Denis (PS 168), his letter to Brother Théophile (PS 061), and one of his letters to Brother François (PS 197). The following are just a few excerpts from those letters:

To Brother Dominique, Marcellin wrote,

...A little more humility and obedience would not hurt your situation any... and ...As for you, dear friend, we will always be ready to please you and even to obey you. Show us a task at which you can remain constant and content, and we will entrust it to you right away. It is a very sad illness, to be happy only in places where one is not. It is also a terrible mistake to go looking for any other way to do good than the one which has been entrusted to us.

To Brother Cassien, Marcellin consults:

...So then, dear brother, what have you got to be upset about? If the members of the Society of Mary are too imperfect to serve

as models for you, dear Cassien, then look at her who can be the model of the perfect and the imperfect and who loves them all: the perfect because they practice virtue and lead others to do good, especially in community; and the imperfect because it is especially for their sake that Mary was raised to the sublime dignity of Mother of God.

In his 1st November 1831 letter, Marcellin advises Brother Barthélemy on how to “win over his students”:

...Tell them, ‘God loves you, and I also love you, because Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints love you so much’. Then tell them, ‘Do you know why God loves you so much? It is because you were purchased with his blood, and you can become great saints, and with very little difficulty, if you really want to.’⁵⁵

To Denis, Marcellin writes, “If you want me to continue to admonish you for your failing, good friend, you must not consider my admonitions so strange...”⁵⁶

To Brother Théophile, who is anxious about a situation at the school in Marlhes, Marcellin recommends:

“...Why worry? Let us act as if we were sure of total success and give all honor to Jesus and Mary.”

And to François, fearful that his talents and abilities are not up to the tasks at hand, Marcellin says, “Just try to do your duty well and God will do what you cannot...”

Clearly, Marcellin had the ability to foster the development of his “Little Brothers.”

Developing & Influencing Others... another example!

How does a “master” mentor a “novice?” **By spending time with the person, speaking with the person, advising, encouraging, and modeling behavior.** We can get a sense of how Marcellin “developed and influenced others” by examining what others have said about one of those Brothers “developed/formed” by Marcellin: Brother Jean-Baptiste Furet.

We know that Jean-Baptiste arrived in Lavalla on 27th March 1822. He was fourteen and a half years old and arrived as an answer to Marcellin’s prayer to Our Lady of Le Puy. For the next fifty years, Jean-Baptiste was to be “*a loyal disciple and give the Institute, in addition to his apostolic work, the treasure of his many writings which transmit our Marist story and spirituality*” (Delorme, 2008). Jean-Baptiste also knew Marcellin during the last 18 years of our Founder’s life.

Brother Amphiloque, in his unpublished biographical essay written in 1917 at the request of Brother Stratonique, Superior General, indicated that Jean-Baptiste had spent time in Charlieu, Feurs, Millery, and St. Symphorien d’Ozon, Neuville, Bourg Argental, Saint Pol-sur-Ternoise, and the Hermitage. He served for thirty-two years as Provincial Assistant, either in Midi or the Centre. He was Provincial of Saint Paul-Trois-Chateaux following the amalgamation of the Brothers of Father Mazelier in 1842 and oversaw the amalgamation of the Brothers of Viviers with our Institute in 1844. By his presence and his interactions, Jean-Baptiste helped form postulants, novices, and “third year” novices, and wrote many books, such as the *Life of Father Champagnat*, which have helped serve as a living memory of the Founder. Yet, more significant than the historical details of this unpublished essay, is the revelation of Marcellin’s influence on the young Jean-Baptiste and how this influence helped to shape all those who came into contact with Jean-Baptiste (Delorme, 2008). Influence in this context is the ability to persuade, convince, or impact others in order to get them to go along with or support your agenda.

In his Circular of 8 April 1872, two months after Jean Baptiste's death, Brother Louis Marie, Superior General, wrote,

In Brother Jean-Baptiste, it is reason, intelligence, and common sense which stand out. Even piety, which seemed to be more particularly a matter of the heart, he wished to be above all solid, wise, and based on principles of faith... And who, what's more, was more cheerful, more fulfilled, more loveable, more captivating than him? (Circular, vol. IV, p. 239)

Brother Amphiloque recorded the words of one witness,

Brother Jean Baptiste was always cheerful in the gentlest and friendliest way. The attraction of his person and the happiness one felt approaching him; the great ease with which one could speak to him, the facility with which one opened one's heart to him, were they not the effect of translucent joy which made him so amiable... (Amphiloque, 2008, pp. 112-113)

Another witness confirmed that Brother Jean-Baptiste "...had a marvelous gift for consoling, encouraging, lifting up, strengthening...one never left his room...without taking away renewed courage, contentment, and a desire to do better" (Amphiloque, 2008, p. 88).

In his views on how to form young Brothers, Jean-Baptiste follows the advice surely given to him and modeled for him by Marcellin. Again, Brother Amphiloque gives an account of what Jean-Baptiste said to a Director who requested that two young brothers be removed from a particular apostolate and community:

Remove them! Remove them! That's easy to say. But if each time someone causes a fuss you move him on, by the end of the year, he'll have caused turmoil in twenty establishments... So we need to take things easy... You need to be patient... I need to be patient.

Let's join forces to knock the rough edges off these fellows... You must understand that today we need to work with our recruits and not send them on a tour of the country... (2008, p. 252)

Why spend some time on the life of Brother Jean-Baptiste? Many of the comments and adjectives used to describe Jean-Baptiste could be used (and were used) to describe Marcellin.

In his Circular of 8th April 1872, Brother Louis-Marie, SG, wrote that

the Venerated Founder owes his continued presence thirty-two years after his death” to an Assistant who “continued and perfected his work... Is he not like a second Founder for us? (Circular, Vol. IV, p. 250)

Brother Jean-Baptiste had “*a very special mission in the Institute--- that of establishing and completing it*” (Circular, Vol. IV, p. 279).

To understand how Marcellin developed and influenced others, one just has to look at the life and the work of Brother Jean-Baptiste.

Building Bonds

This competency is about **working to build or maintain friendly, reciprocal, and warm relationships with people**. Building Bonds means developing and maintaining good relationships, like those within a family. The person who possesses this competency nurtures relationships related to activities or projects and has a wide, informal network of colleagues.

Marcellin, through his personal visits, his letters, and conferences, was able to “build bonds” among a wide variety of people, especially his Brothers. While Marcellin had an “imposing appearance” to Brother

Sylvestre, it *“did not prevent him from being cheerful...and during recreation periods, he always had some witty remarks to amuse”* the Brothers. Sylvestre goes on to say that *“more than that, he taught us and had us play some very pleasant, harmless games. He even didn’t mind joining in* (Sylvestre, 1992, p.17). For Brother Jean-Baptiste, *“No father has ever loved his children more tenderly than Father Champagnat loved all his Brothers”* (Furet, 1989, p. 426).

Marcellin also did manual work with the Brothers, even when it was seen by many ecclesial leaders as beneath the dignity of the priestly state. Brother Laurent (1842) recalled that it was

...He who built our whole house at La Valla... as we had never been trained as builders, it was necessary to explain every task to us and frequently he had to redo our work. When there were some big stones to carry, it was always he himself who carried them. It took two of us to put them to him on his back. He was never angry of our awkwardness at work. It is true that we were full of good will, but we were very clumsy, especially me... When he came in at evening, his clothes were often torn, and he was covered in sweat and dust. He was never happier than when he had worked long and hard. (Green, 2007, p. 2)

Indeed, one of the reasons for his acceptance by the Brothers, for the respect they showed him, for the confidence they placed in him, is that he earned their love by showing love-by building relationships with them.

In his letters, Marcellin’s affection for his Brothers is quite evident:

*“...Do not forget to tell all the brothers how much I love them, and how much I suffer from being separated from them...”*⁵⁷

*“...You should never doubt my attachment to you. I never once go to the holy altar without praying for you...”*⁵⁸

*“...I embrace you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary...”*⁵⁹

*“...My dear friend, tell Brother Sylvestre how much I love him...”*⁶⁰

“...I give all of you an assurance of the tender affection with which...”⁶¹

“...I am brokenhearted to know you are sick...”⁶²

“...While I await the pleasure of embracing you...”⁶³

“...You know, dear Brother, that I love you and am entirely devoted to you in Jesus Christ; you know how dear you are to me and how much I am affected by all your difficulties...”

“Carissimi, my beloved, my very dear brothers...”⁶⁴

“I consider you all as my dear children in Jesus and Mary and carry you with all my affection in my heart...”⁶⁵

“I carry you all very deeply in my heart...”⁶⁶

“I also love Brother Appollinaire, Brother Nizier...”⁶⁷

“Tell him that I love him with all my heart...”⁶⁸

In the fifteen “Paris letters” from Marcellin to François (1838) alone, thirty Brothers are mentioned by name, and ten of those Brothers are mentioned more than once. In his correspondence to the Brother Directors, Marcellin says: “Tell your Brothers that I love them as I would my own children; that I think often of them and constantly, pray for them.”

Then, to a community shortly before he was due to visit them: “I am eager to come to see you so I can embrace both of you...”⁶⁹

Every single one of his Circulars speaks of charity, which, for Marcellin, was a hallmark of a religious family. In them, Marcellin’s affection for all the Brothers is expressed. In January 1836, he wrote:

Our very dear brothers, our heart loves to remember you each day and to present you all to the Lord at the holy altar; but today we cannot resist the pleasant satisfaction of expressing to you our affectionate feelings, and of showing you our fatherly affection.

Cherished and well-beloved, you are constantly the special object of our loving concern. All our desires and all our wishes are for your happiness⁷⁰

Marcellin wanted charity and unity to be paramount among his Brothers. For him, it was a way to build up the “family.” This sentiment was also evident in his *Spiritual Testament*:

...Dear Brothers, I beg of you with all the love of my heart, and by all the love you bear me, keep ever alive among you the charity of Christ. Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you. Be of one heart and one mind. Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians: ‘See how they love one another!’ That is the desire of my heart and my burning wish, at this last moment of my life. Yes, my dearest Brothers, hear these last words of your Father, which are those of our Blessed Savior: **‘Love one another!’**⁷¹

Marcellin did not stop at showing his affection merely by words; he gave practical proof of it by what he did. Brother Sylvestre recounts a story about a postulant, who on his death bed, wanted to be received as a Brother:

The good Father, who recognized the great desire that the postulant had to become a brother, did not want him to take the regret to the grave. Therefore, after having given him the Last Sacraments, he brought a Brother’s coat, blessed it, spread it himself over the bed of the dying postulant and said, ‘My dear friend, I receive you, from this instant, as a member of the Congregation, and as a mark of your admission, receive this coat in the place of the holy habit which you so ardently desire to put on. (Green, 2007, p. 86)

It is in these ways that Marcellin was able to forge a religious family.

With bonds built, Marcellin and his Brothers collaborated in providing a Christian education for the poor.

Marcellin was able to work to bring people together to accomplish the tasks at hand and was able to build a strong sense of belonging, leading others to feel they were part of something larger than themselves. And while it should be noted that the governance structure of the Institute was centralized, it seems that Marcellin enjoyed sharing responsibility and enjoyed building the capabilities of others so that “God’s will” and “Mary’s work” would be accomplished.

Conclusion

We conclude where we began---with a reflection on Marcellin from Brother Jean-Baptiste:

Father Champagnat owed much to the success of his ministry and in the foundation of his Institute, to his bright, open, friendly and considerate character with its ability to resolve situations of strife. An unassuming affability, a straight-forwardness and impression of kindness radiated from his face, gaining all hearts and disposing minds to accept without difficulty and even with pleasure, his opinions, his instructions, and his reproofs... (Furet, 1989, p. 266)

Marcellin’s leadership was rooted in his interactions with others and his sensitivity to others’ feelings, temperaments, and motivations... in short, it lay in his **ability to understand the very real details of human relationships. He had the ability to “read” situations, to understand the social context that influences behavior, to form and develop others, and to inspire.** Marcellin was able to choose strategies that would lead to the fulfillment of his primary goal: to provide a Christian education to poor children.

As a servant leader, Marcellin was a “servant first,” focused on the

needs of others before even considering his own. He acknowledges other people's perspectives, gave them the support they needed to meet their ministerial and personal goals, involved them in decisions where appropriate, and **built a sense of community** within the fledgling Institute. His interaction with all those he encountered leads to **higher engagement, more trust, and stronger relationships with the others. It also led to increased innovation.**

Through some of his correspondence and through the reminiscences of those who knew him well, we see Marcellin as calm, serene, open, constant, and courageous. Aware of his own limitations, he was gifted with a deep intelligence in the practical sense, and he was exceedingly confident in his convictions. Marcellin always hoped that the quality which would define his "Little Brothers of Mary" would be simplicity, and in many ways, this quality characterized Marcellin. For Marcellin, simplicity was straightforwardness in relationships with others, **enthusiasm for the work at hand, and an uncomplicated confidence in his God.** He shared this quality with his Brothers whom he hoped would become like a family.

We have seen that Marcellin was **truly talented in human relationships**; his common sense and his compassion made him a popular confessor throughout his life. He was able to **communicate effectively and empathize easily** with others. Yet, we know from our Marist history that Marcellin was not a man for writing spiritual treatises, but he was a man of determination and action, a man of heart and affection. His emphasis was on the heart and on relationships – both with God and other people. It was, and is, key to our spiritual heritage and to our Marist pedagogy. It was through this heart and affection... for the youth of rural France and for those who would teach them... that Marcellin succeeded in doing what many thought impossible. These qualities of Marcellin's leadership — "his open, friendly and considerate character... his unassuming affability, a straightforwardness and impression of kindness"—allowed him to build the kingdom of God in his time and circumstance; may his witness and

his style of leadership be a guiding inspiration for those of us who call ourselves “Marist.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Marcellin Champagnat, a Model of Servant Leadership

The essence of servant leadership is a transversal element, present either implicitly or explicitly, in all areas impacting Marist life and mission, and thus is a foundational component of the charism of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. Below are some questions which could help in your reflections as a Marist servant leader:

Listening and Empathy

- Do I listen actively and receptively to what others have to say, even when they disagree with me?
- Do I genuinely care about the welfare of people working with me?

Healing

- Do I promote tolerance, kindness, and honesty in the ministry?
- Do I invest considerable time and energy in helping others overcome their weaknesses and develop their potential?

Awareness and Self Awareness

- Do I have the courage to assume full responsibility for my mistakes and acknowledge my own limitations?
- Do I have the courage and determination to do what is right in spite of difficulty or opposition?

Persuasion

- Am I able to rally people around me and inspire them to achieve a

common goal?

- Do I have a heart to serve others?

Conceptualization, Foresight, and Stewardship

- Am I able to present a vision that is readily and enthusiastically embraced by others?
- Is my leadership based on a strong sense of mission?

Commitment to the Growth of People and Building Community

- To inspire team spirit, do I communicate enthusiasm and confidence?
- Do I grant all my workers a fair amount of responsibility and latitude in carrying out their tasks?
- Do I create a climate of trust and openness to facilitate participation in decision-making?
- Do I consistently delegate responsibility to others and empower them to do their job?

ABBREVIATION

PS PS Paul Sester. Cataloging of the Letters of Father Champagnat

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- 2 Letter to Queen Marie-Amelie, 1835-05, PS 059
- 3 Letter to King Louis-Philippe, 1834-01-28; PS 034
- 4 WITNESSES ON MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT: MINOR WITNESSES (Taken from, Bro. Leonard Voegtle, FMS, Postulator General, “Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat”), Brother Callinique, page 7.
- 5 Letter to Brother Barthélemy; Ampuis, Rhône; 1830-01-21; PS 014
- 6 Letter to Brother Barthélemy; Ampuis, Rhône; 1831-01-03; PS 019
- 7 Letter to Fr. Denis; St. Didier-sur-Rochefort, Loire; 1838-01-05, PS 168

- 8 Letter to François; Notre Dame de l'Hermitage; 1838-06-23; PS 197
- 9 Letter To Madame Marie Clermondon, Veuve Champagnat; Rozey, Marllhes, Loire; 1838-03-16; PS 180
- 10 Letter to Brother Théodoret; Ampuis, Rhône; 1838-08-12; PS 205
- 11 Letter to Un frère; 1839-07-20; PS 259
- 12 Letter to Brother Basin; Saint-Paul-en-Jarret, Loire; 1839-02-23; PS 244
- 13 Letter to Fr. Avit; Pélussin, Loire; 1839-03-10; PS 247
- 14 Letter to Fr. Anaclet; Saint-Didier-sur-Rochefort, Loire; 1839-03-23; PS 248
- 15 Letter to Brother Marie-Laurent, 8th April 1839; PS 249
- 16 Letter to Brother Apollinaire, 4th August 1837; PS 126
- 17 Letter to Brother Cassien; Sorbiers, Loire; 1834; PS 042
- 18 Witnesses on Marcellin Champagnat: Minor Witnesses (Taken from, Bro. Leonard Voegtle, FMS, Postulator General, "Witness for the Beatification of Marcellin Champagnat"), Fr. Jean Jantin, SM, Testimony, p. 18
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- 23 Letter to Father Gardette, May 1827, PS 003. (PS is understood as "Letters of Marcellin Champagnat" taken from *Letters of Marcellin J.B. Champagnat, Volume 1*, Texts, Edited by Brother Paul Sester, Translated by Brother Leonard Voegtle, Casa Generalizia Dei Fratelli Maristi, Rome, 1991.)
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- 25 Letter to Father Philibert Gardette, May 1837, PS 003
- 26 Letter to Monsieur Simon Cattet, Vicaire général de Lyon, Rhône; 1827-05; PS 004
- 27 Letter to Monsieur Jean Joseph Barou; Lyon, Rhône; 1827-05; PS 007
- 28 Letter to Monseigneur Gaston De Pins; Lyon, Rhône; 1827-05; PS 006
- 29 Letter to Monseigneur Bénigne Troussel d'Hericourt, Evêque d'Autun; Saône-et-Loire; 1839-09-13; PS 268
- 30 Letter to Monseigneur le Cardinal Hughes Robert Jean Charles de Latour D'Auvergne, Evêque d'Arras; Somme; 1840-02-11; PS 319
- 31 Letter to Monseigneur Louis Jacques Maurice De Bonald, Archevêque of Lyon, Rhône; 1840-01-16; PS 314

- 32 Letter to Monsieur Alexandre Denis Devaux de Pleyne; Bourg-Argental, Loire; 1827; PS 008
- 33 Letter to M. Jean-Francois Preynat, Mayor of Sorbiers, October 1834, PS 047
- 34 Letter to Monsieur Jean Baptiste Antoine Merlat; Sympohorien-le-Chateau, Rhône; 1831-04; PS 022
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CHAPTER 19



Marist Style of Prophetic and Servant Leadership: Some Exemplars in Our Tradition

Br. Michael Green
Province of Australia

Let us go back in time to a scene in Marist history from beginning of the last century. The year is 1903, the month of June. The place is Saint-Genis-Laval, near Lyon. A General Chapter of the Brothers has just voted to approve a new set of Constitutions – after a forty-year tussle with authorities in Rome – and it has also re-elected Brother Théophane as Superior General. He is 80 years of age, an old man. As the bells peal and the Chapter delegates process solemnly along the cloister towards the grand chapel of the General House, chanting the *Magnificat* in Latin – all in black soutanes, rabats and cloaks – they are met by harried workers carrying out dismantled segments of the great pipe organ. All around them, furniture has been stacked and goods boxed up for removal. Paper files, written correspondence and records are being readied for burning. It is a moment of contrast and chaos. If it were not so tragic, this incongruous juxtaposition of serenity and urgency would have made for high farce, the stuff of a Monty Python skit. But no-one was laughing. Ominous clouds loomed.

For over thirty years, the imposition of increasingly draconian secularisation laws, and the vitriol of their associated socio-political movements, had been tightening around the Brothers, squeezing them out of schools in which they had taught since the time of Saint Marcellin. From the 1880s, up to twenty schools were being lost each year. Successive Superiors General – Louis-Marie, Nestor, and now Théophane – had needed to lead with agility but without panic amidst this deteriorating situation. They had moved the Brothers from town schools to establish new private ones, and they had been inventive for working out how catechising could take place, and religious life lived. But now the Damoclean sword had finally fallen: with only weeks to deal with it, they were being expelled from France. An abandoned, burnt-out silk mill had been secured over the Italian border near Turin as a place to move the general administration. On 3 July, the octogenarian Superior General farewelled his homeland, never to set foot in it again. Big decisions were needed from him. Leadership needed to be exercised.

Leadership, most especially prophetic or servant leadership, rarely takes place in circumstances of the leader's making or preference. We can imagine that Théophane would have wanted his context to be quite different. Theologically trained, well-read and intelligent, an efficient and big-thinking administrator, and an educationalist of no mean standing having written extensively on the subject in his Circulars and authored a series of school textbooks, he was well suited to lead an expanding international institute given to teaching. He had travelled widely, personally visiting the magnificent new Marist schools that were being planned and built across France, and in other countries such as Canada, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, China and Australia. New Provinces had been established. A second novitiate program had started. He had successfully introduced the cause of Father Champagnat's beatification. Yet, the character of Théophane's leadership would be measured by his response to other challenges. In an Institute whose identity was still quite Franco-centric, Théophane needed to manage the sudden closure of over four hundred Marist schools in France, and a decimation in the number of French Brothers. Within three years, over a thousand of them had become 'secularised' and many had left the Institute altogether.

To understand his response, it is necessary to look at the man himself and the way he had been formed as a Marist. Like Brother Louis-Marie, Brother Théophane had begun his Marist journey under the gentle and profoundly spiritual guidance of a Brother who was the novice master at l'Hermitage for more than a quarter of a century, a man whom Marcellin himself had appointed and had described as 'a saint'. Brother Bonaventure was a deeply mystical person, known for his infectious joy, his unflinching kindness, and his life of intimate contemplation. He was close to God. He had a gift for inspiring in his novices a compelling delight in their spiritual lives, and a sense of unshakeable confidence in God. Brother Théophane's leading that singing procession at Saint-Genis in 1903, as the Marist world appeared to be crumbling, was no act of a person who was insulated from the reality of what was happening, or in denial of it. It was, rather, who Théophane had become as a Marist. We

can speculate, but confidently so, that the words of Psalm 46 filled his heart: *'Be still, and know that I am God.'*

This is, of course, where any prophet needs to begin: to be in and of God. Prophetic leadership is wholly the fruit of one's interior life. It is to act and speak in ways that align with how God's will has been carefully discerned. And to know that will to be essentially hopeful. Prophets know this at the core of their hearts. Their song is always the *Magnificat*.

The year 1826 – perhaps the most crucial in Marcellin's spiritual life-journey – was shaped by the same imperative as he had to learn to trust God in the face of apparent annihilation: his own serious illness; dismissals and desertions of some of the most promising members; mounting debts; diocesan antagonism and white-anting; piercing betrayal. It was after this veritable 'dark night of the soul' experience, as a man already ten years a priest, that we see Marcellin start to quote the words of Psalm 127: *Nisi Dominus ...* It was quite a learning for him, a fundamental challenge to his own self-confidence. By natural ability Marcellin was a leader; people liked him and gathered about him. He inspired them, helped them to become their best selves. But to be a prophetic leader, he had to learn that his project was not about him or his ambitions or his benchmarks of success; he was not its centre. It was God's work, and it would happen in God's time and in God's way.

Marcellin chose leaders and influencers in whom he sensed similar spiritual attitudes and depth – although they were enormously different in personality and human giftedness from himself. Bonaventure was one; Louis, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie among the others. And of course, Brother François. To read their writings today is to be impressed not only at their extraordinarily broad knowledge of Scripture and the spiritual masters, but also their unaffected intimacy with Jesus. Brother François's four-part Circular on the 'Spirit of Faith', in which he attempts to describe the essence of Marist spirituality, is a standout example. It is helpful when prophets can write and speak well, but it is essential that they have something

that is worth hearing and reading. François did. Perhaps the highlight of this Circular is the way it draws its Marist readers – whom he challenges to be, above all else, disciples of Christ and lovers of the gospel – into the heart of St Paul’s letter to the Galatians. *‘I live now, no not I, but Christ lives in me’* (Gal.2:20), then he adds for emphasis, *‘... thinks, judges, loves, hates and does all in me’*. For François, the quintessential trait of a Marist is to allow what Galatians calls *‘Christ being formed in us’* (Gal.4:19). There is no shortcut to this for someone who seeks to be a prophetic leader: it calls for time, personal investment, study, stillness and surrender.

Each of those who has followed François as Superior General has been a man of and for his time. During the next eighty years, up to the early years of the Second World War, came the erudite Louis-Marie (1860-1879), the energetic Nestor (1880-1883), the capable Théophile (1883-1907), the charming and optimistic Stratonique (1907-1920), and the caring and brave Diogène (1920-1942). Each one faced crises and challenges, dealing with the urgent calls of his own period. But all of them shared this: a priority on personal prayer and seeking congruence with the action of the Spirit. ‘It was difficult,’ wrote Brother Jean-Emile of Brother Diogène, ‘to arrive in the chapel before him.’ Similar comments can be readily found about each leader. Half a century after him, Brother Basilio Rueda (1967-1985) was described as someone ‘who lived in great intimacy with God.’ His most common theme as a retreat-giver was ‘contemplation’. In an interview with the Spanish journal *Religiosos de hoy*, he explained that, ‘When one listens attentively to the word of God, an intimate dialogue is created. This dialogue sparks a fiery desire to proclaim through one’s life that God is life.’ In his Circular on ‘Obedience’, Basilio focussed this idea more theologically: ‘We all carry within ourselves a great mystery: Jesus is in me and I am in Jesus.’ It could have been François writing these lines. Basilio took his place in a line of Superiors General as a person of great spiritual depth and closeness to Jesus; it is only because of this that any of them could be called prophetic.

Each of them has faced existential crises of major proportions. For example, following on from Théophane, who also had to deal with uprisings in China in the first years of the twentieth century and the violent deaths of Brothers there, Stratonique, elected in 1907, continued to lead the Marist world through the struggles and contradictions of laicisation in France before it and other countries became enveloped in the vicissitudes of the Great War. Brothers found themselves conscripted to the armies of opposing sides, institutions were requisitioned for military purposes, the fledgling but promising German Province all but collapsed. Diogène, elected in 1920, was faced with the seizure of schools and expulsions in Turkey, the fierce secularisation in Mexico, the Great Depression, the horrors of the Spanish Civil War with so many Brothers callously killed, before the world once again was gripped by global war. The Communist takeovers in China and Cuba in the 1950s and the expulsion of the Brothers from those thriving Provinces, the decades of military and civil dictatorships from the 1960s in over twenty countries of Latin America and Africa which had a Marist presence, the religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria later that decade, and in Algeria and Rwanda in the 1990s, are all examples that required leaders at local, provincial and international level to be people of understanding, resilience, ingenuity and hope. Prophetic leaders were needed who could give heart and engender promise.

In addition to external threats, the second half of the twentieth brought with it major challenges from within. The paradigmatic re-orientations ushered in by Vatican II – or, perhaps more accurately, the social and ecclesial movements which had prompted John XXIII to convoke the Council – sparked a profound crisis of identity and purpose in the Institute. The intuition of the General Chapter of 1967 was not to choose the sure-and-steady candidate who had been thought by many to be the most likely next Superior General, but to elect someone whom they discerned was better positioned to lead Marists prophetically through the uncharted waters ahead. Brother Basilio – just 43 years of age and having never been a Provincial – was the providential choice.

Did Basilio have a strategic plan? Perhaps he had some rudimentary elements of one: certainly, he had the ad *experimentum* Constitutions drafted by the Chapter along with several other capitular documents and priorities that had been identified. They were insightful contemporary publications. But Basilio's point of embarkation was not to hand down any maps or directions from on high, but to go out to listen and to understand his Brothers and their life stories. His first Circular (he wrote fourteen them, including some real door-stoppers!) named the reality: there were aspects, maybe fundamentals, concerning the nature of the consecrated life and the priorities of ministry that seemed to be anachronistic. They were answers for another time and place. Change was needed. Arguably, there is no trickier task for a leader than to lead a group effectively and cohesively through significant change, to unshackle established restraints while keeping everyone cohered around the essentials.

It did not seem to go well. From the numerical highpoint in 1965 of almost ten thousand Brothers, by the end of Basilio's first two years, more Brothers had left the Institute than at any time before or since. Literally hundreds had departed from individual countries. Houses of formation emptied, annually professed Brothers left in droves, middle aged Brothers questioned and explored aspects of their lives which they felt they had been forcibly foreclosed on them. By the time he handed over to Charles Howard in 1985, there were over thirty per cent fewer Brothers than when he had taken the reins. No Superior General had ever had that happen; even by the end of Théophane's and Stratonique's generalates, overall numbers had actually increased.

Yet, Basilio was recognised then and since – both within the Institute and across the wider Church – as one of the leading prophets of the post-Conciliar period. God's work, in God's time, in God's way. A mark of his leadership was to meet with the Brothers – each and every one of them. He went into their space, their reality, and spoke to them brother to brother. He dialogued with them in down-to-earth language (his all-night schedules became legendary), he surveyed them extensively,

he recorded and analysed and synthesised. And he prayed about it. He wrote back to them individually – more than 50,000 letters! And he fed back to the Marist world and the wider Church what he had learned – doing so in raw and unvarnished ways. He wanted honesty. Some see his greatest Circular to be his last in 1984, called ‘Fidelity’, in which he reflected on what had transpired since 1967. The title captures something essential of the Divine – the ‘hesed’ of God revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures – which Basilio knew first-hand to be alive in the Institute and which he celebrated.

Each Superior General has found that an embrace of the present moment and its people is the locus for prophetic leadership. Prophecy always requires time and place, people and context, the here and now. It was so for the Jewish prophets of old as it was for the Marist Superiors of any decade, and is also for today’s Marist leader at every level. Whatever ideals and aspirations might well inform the exercise of the role, the prophetic leader is never a disconnected theorist. He or she is a person who sits well with the famous opening lines of *Gaudium et Spes* (1965):

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.

Brother Basilio was alert to this from the start. His first Circular in 1968 urged the Brothers not to be frightened of the world as it was, let alone to retreat from it. They were, rather, to be a ‘sacrament and leaven’ for the world. In writing this, Basilio intuited what writers on leadership in the twenty-first century might name as ‘distributed leadership’. That is, in a community or institution that has a sense of shared mission, then leadership – in our case, prophetic leadership – will be shared by widely and deeply among people. To describe leadership in this way is to recognise that everyone in a group has an impact on everyone else, and that the challenge is to bring the aggregated impacts of all into consonance and harmony. In the

case of a Marist community, it is that people will be bringing the Gospel of Jesus to life in recognisably Marist ways, and resonating this in one another.

There are countless examples of such Marist density in our history and our current situations, made so by prophetic leaders who can achieve a 'distribution' of prophecy among all those with whom they minister and whom they serve. Locally, Marist schools and youth projects are replete with this. In the most unlikely of places it is found, from the favelas of São Paulo, for example, to the streets of Aleppo with its 'Blue Marists'. It is a sign that Christlife is being nurtured, as Water from the Rock describes it, which is the fruit of prophetic leadership. Like Mary moving in haste into the hill country, or Marcellin setting out without delay to go to the dying boy in the Pilat foothills, Marists are people who do not remain comfortable or secure in their own world, but who proactively go out to meet the other, in the other's space. The prophetic leader does not lead from behind a desk or on the end of an email.

Sometimes, perhaps often, it is from opting to be present in this way that prompts a leader to the new and the different, and to respond in ways that incarnate Christlife in fresh ways for the circumstances of the time. At the outbreak of the First World War, for example, Brother Diogène, who was then Assistant for the North of France, found himself caught in the massive Marist complex at Beaucamps which had been taken over by the occupying German army. Rather than wish the time and place and people were different, he embraced them, earning the respect and affection of both the military and the local people, and becoming the de facto mayor of Beaucamps. Given the nickname – in a combination of French and German words – Le Frère Prior, he put himself at the service of farmers and labourers, women and men, poor and rich, soldiers and civilians, demonstrating kindness, tact and sheer bravery as it was needed. It is unlikely that his role description as an Assistant General would have said anything about any of this. For his efforts he was later awarded the *Légion d'Honneur*.

It is one thing to be prophetic, it can be another to be a prophetic leader. A leader seeks to have an institutional influence and a cultural impact. The Hebrew prophets typically spoke to the whole people, challenged the community collectively, for that is what a leader does. The eighteen years of Brother Basilio's leadership did this: the Marist world was in a different place in 1985 from where it was in 1967. Basilio had inspired cultural change. Their self-understandings of their preferred mission focus and their priorities in living as religious had been re-shaped. This allowed, for example, in the year before the Chapter, in 1984, the Marist Provincials of Latin America to gather in Chosica, Peru, and to opt decisively as a group to align their Provinces with the evangelising priorities that their bishops had mapped out in the significant statements from Medellín, Colombia (1968) and Puebla, Mexico (1979). The Brothers admitted that, institutionally, they had been complicit in the 'bi-classism' that plagued the Latin American Church. Three years later, they gathered in Cali, Colombia, with the new Superior General, Brother Charles Howard, to re-affirm the directions that had been set.

It was a change of direction not without controversy or conflict, not an easy one for many to take, but Charles and Basilio were leaders who could move Marists towards the 'institutional conversion' of which later General Chapters spoke. As well as this major re-orientation of the Institute's mission priorities, the first steps were ready to be taken for the next major institutional conversion in line with Vatican II: the recognition that Marist spirituality was not something restricted to the Brothers alone as male religious, but a way of the Gospel of Jesus that could be lived by a broad range of people – women as well as men; laypeople and priests as well as the Brothers; married and single; young and old. This was a paradigm shift. Beginning with the vision of Brother Charles, and then growing in momentum and depth during the leadership of his successors, the first tentative steps were to mature into a whole new way of understanding who were today's Marists, how they could share life and ministry in communion, and indeed how they could share responsibility for the continued development of Marist life and mission. In turn, of course, this

called for new discernment for what consecrated life meant within a wider Marist charismatic family.

Such prophetic leadership was inextricably tied into servant leadership, as it always is. The second cannot exist without the first. And the key to servant leadership is genuine encounter, a meeting of hearts. It is to approach the other in a spirit of genuine humility, not with readymade, fix-it, top-down solutions, but with a listening heart and sleeves rolled up. This had been the case with Brother Diogène at Beaucamps back in World War One; it was only because he took the attitude of a listener and a servant, that he was able to lead in a prophetic way during those trying years. Decades later, at the level of the Institute, it was the same. In convening the Provincials to gather for a General Conference in Veranópolis, Brazil, in 1989 (for the first time away from the General House), Brother Charles required them all to make a ‘pilgrimage of solidarity’, to spend time with fellow Marists in a social-economic situation that was materially poor. He did the same when convening the General Chapter four years later. Similarly, when new forms of Marist life were being imagined, it was essential for the lay people who understood themselves as Marists to have dialogue with the Brothers. It was not for the Marist Brothers to define for Marist laypeople what it meant for them to be Marist. It began with listening, and listening was preceded by respect.

The orientation of prophetic and servant leadership is essentially the same: to be below rather than above. Just like Jesus’s washing of his disciples’ feet as their ‘lord and master’, so also it is for us. It is to embrace the mentality that was promoted by Bishop Tonino Bello (1935-93) who called for a ‘church of the apron’ – describing the first ‘vestment’ as Jesus’s apron at the Last Supper. It is to listen and dialogue and so to understand. A telling early tradition in Marist leadership from the time of Marcellin was letter writing. Every Brother was required to write to Marcellin (and later the Superior General and Assistants) three times a year, the superiors being required to reply to each. We have hundreds of pastoral letters written by Brothers François, Jean-Baptiste and Louis-Marie – letters of

understanding, wisdom, respect and encouragement. Unfortunately, the Holy See removed this requirement from the Brothers' Constitutions because it judged that the superiors (being non-ordained) were not qualified to offer spiritual accompaniment! But it continued by one means or another. Brother Diogène, for example, was said to spend the greater part of each day at his desk reading and responding by hand to letters from the Brothers all over the world – in French, Italian, English, Spanish and German. We have already seen Brother Basilio's prolific output (even though he did keep five full-time secretaries!). Every Superior General – from the time of Marcellin – spend much time on the road. As the Marist world expanded, so did the time and effort invested in travel, not for its own sake but to be with, to be present.

Mary is portrayed in the Lucan Scriptures as the paradigm of the prophet and servant: like Jeremiah she is discomfited and questions, but allows herself, with both vulnerability and openness, to welcome God and to find harmony with the will of God. She then sets out to be of service, entering Elizabeth's house. Their encounter is one of joy and justice. Similarly, Marist leader is not a prisoner of the office nor the theory book, nor someone who leads via disembodied memo; the Marist leader is someone for whom the lives of fellow Marists and young people is sacred ground, where the will of God is found in encounter. The credibility of the Marist leader will always be found in his and her readiness to be Mary in their time and place, for the people they serve.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What challenges exist in your leadership context for you to be personally present to the people of your school, institution or project – to be someone who goes out like Mary to be a person of encounter, and also a person who 'wears an apron'?

2. Prophecy is essentially about giving voice or witness to the mind and heart of God. What are your ways of bringing yourself into resonance with God? How do you build this into the rhythm of your day?
3. The task of distributing one's leadership deeply and widely among the faculty and staff of a school, institution or programme is a priority for a good leader. As a Marist leader, how do inspire and empower people to come to see the Marist way of the gospel as their own?
4. An effective leader is never someone who offers yesterday's answers to today's questions. We can see from our Marist history that leaders have needed to be agile and alert in order to lead their communities. What are the emerging educational and spiritual needs of people in your situation that require you to be creative, hopeful and daring in your leadership?
5. Have you ever considered yourself to 'be Mary'? What can it mean for you to be the Mary-figure in your community?

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CHAPTER 20



Spiritual and Ethical Wisdom in Leadership

Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez
Vicar General

The Search for the Greatness of Spirit

....(he) hitched up his soutane and with determination,
cut the stoneto build the Hermitage.
He was a tender leader, who was straightforward,
firm and equitable . (RL 84)

The Oxford dictionary (2021) defines “spirit” as the human capacity to experience emotions and affections, it is the strength or the energy to do, resolve or take up something; or the intention to do or succeed at something; the mental or psychological disposition of someone. It is used to infuse strength or energy into someone or to exhort them to do something difficult. It is this spirit that we are going to reflect upon in this article, and particularly on two of its components, ethics and spirituality.

Marcellin Champagnat was a person of moral and spiritual stature, capable of inspiring others to new areas of service. Without wishing to idealize him, we do recognize his extraordinary greatness of spirit. He was a very human saint and a very holy human being. With his attitude towards life -with eyes and heart wide open -, and with his deeply held faith, he looked upon the world, and particularly upon those who lived around him, in order to give some sort of response to the circumstances of poverty and ignorance, both educational and religious, particularly among children and young people. He freed himself from a number of the prerogatives and customs that surrounded the priestly life in order to create a community with a vision of the future. He took the lead in loving and serving. He gave his life to it, all the while searching with generosity for the good of others, He struggled against wind and waves in order to bring his work forward. He always had a profound sense of God and a constant awareness of the presence of Mary.

The admiration which he provoked among his friends and neighbours is reflected in the description by Br. Jean Baptiste Furet:

Father Champagnat was tall in stature, with an upright and dignified carriage; his forehead was broad and his facial features strongly marked; his complexion had a brownish tint; a grave countenance reflected a reserve and earnestness which inspired respect and often even, on first acquaintance, timorousness and a certain apprehension. Such a reaction was short-lived, however, giving way to confidence and affection after one listened to him for a few minutes; for beneath that slightly harsh and somewhat stern exterior, he concealed the happiest of characters. He was endowed with an upright mind and a deep, sure judgement, his heart was kind and sympathetic, animated with noble and lofty sentiments. Marcellin's disposition was bright, open, frank, resolute, courageous, enthusiastic, constant and equable. (Furet, 1856/1989, p. 265)

From this description, we can extract important traits, which are not the only ones, with an ethical dimension of his leadership: upright conscience, good judgement, an ability to gaze profoundly on someone or something, goodness, sensitivity, nobility of heart and elevated feelings. In his character we also find openness, sincerity, firmness, enthusiasm, ardour, tenacity, and calmness.

These personal traits of the Founder live on in our vision of Marist leadership and are part of our DNA. Each one of us, with our own personality and characteristics, aspire to experience the kind of leadership that is, at the same time, profoundly connected with this common identity and which allows us to express our own uniqueness.

Max Scheler said that «the saint is authentically present in his disciples and really lives in them». Whoever feels the call to be a leader must have the sufficient perspective to know, at every moment that, beyond his or her own faults or those of others, he can reach this greatness of spirit without which no leadership is possible. (Sonnenfeld, 2021, pos. 100)

Seeking this greatness of spirit, shows correctly that ethics is at the heart of leadership (Ciulla, 2004), as well as spirituality. Both are good and necessary companions to be able to direct with wisdom, rectitude, and vision so that we might have greater self awareness and ability to lead in order to act with discernment, a prophetic stance, compassion, and intelligence. These act like a compass, which orient the why and the how, present in the various processes of leadership and its dynamics.

Ethics serve to “give reason”, sustain and endorse one’s own code of conduct which can be concentrated into the following two questions: Why do we believe what we believe? Why do we do what we do? (Cortina & Martínez, 1996). These same questions, can be posed for one’s spirituality.

Ethics and spirituality fortify one’s personal identity, and the identity of the community, the institution and the organization. Both help to develop a coherent and upright praxis and they interact to inspire and orient our “way” of directing, forming and governing (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Both help us to “inhabit” our time and space.

As Marists, we depend on a “moral” identity, that is to say, a set of shared values which define us. At the heart of this moral code, the following virtues are accentuated: simplicity, humility and modesty, family spirit and fraternity, a good work ethic, and a sense of mission. This DNA is integrated equally with a special love for the poor and needy, a love for all equally, and a complete care for children, a passion for mission without borders and in “all the dioceses of the world” as well as the so-called “little virtues”. All these attitudes model our way of living. Along with many other aspects, they permeate our way of “being Marist” and our particular way of acting. We aspire to an authentic Marist leadership style if we can manage to integrate these attributes into our daily manner of living. The greatness of spirit resides in a progressive maturation of this “ethos” and a respective “spiritual” evolution.

It would be good to ask ourselves: For me, in what does this greatness of spirit consist? In what way does it coincide with the example of Champagnat? What other values would I emphasize?

The Care of the “Noble Sentiments”

We grow when there is passion and commitment to something which becomes meaningful, life-giving or relevant, for something that inspires and captivates, that is good, just, and noble. This is what the teacher believes when he desires to give his pupils formation and wisdom; to contribute to their character; to show them how to prepare themselves and reach a full and happy life. This is what the youth leader seeks when he transmits apostolic passion in meaningful experiences of faith and service. This is what the director of a school does when he works side by side with his colleagues to develop improvements and innovations for the good of his educational establishment and of the community that surrounds it. It is what the superior or leader of a community, a fraternity or association does when he tries to care for and help his brothers or sisters in the best way possible. In all these experiences, there is passion and a sense of vocation. In these, to lead means to have the possibility to inspire, first oneself and then other people; to glimpse new horizons for the present and the future; it is also a way of living certain values for which it is worthwhile committing time and one's whole life. These noble sentiments, with the choices they bring, make the difference.

This is particularly valid if there is a profound connection between oneself and the functions, jobs, or roles that one is asked to take on. The internal harmony allows one to experience, assess and, if possible, to enjoy the work or the function. If this is not possible, it is difficult to face the daily tasks. When someone enjoys his or her work, one is able to transmit with words and deeds that which is going on inside, what makes us who we are and which connects with our authentic self, because, as the Gospel puts it so well: “each one speaks from the abundance of the heart” (Lk

6, 45) and, as a principle, “the good man produces good from his store” (Mt 12, 35). When this integration and harmony exists, two of the real problems of leadership are immediately eliminated: the fear of being a leader and cynicism (Torralba, 2021). An important step, then, is to develop, to whatever extent possible, noble sentiments to be integrated in one’s leadership style, which make a difference and allow us to inspire others from our own harmony, without fear or cynicism.

I would honestly wonder: What are the noble sentiments that motivate me in my style of leadership? Where do I find the required harmony to lead without fear or cynicism?

The Accessibility of a “Sensitive Heart”

*Day after day, we feel called to commit ourselves to the world,
to contemplate the world with the eyes and the heart of God
(WR 90)*

We are an apostolic community. We have the ethical imperative to transform the realities of children and young people; to promote a significant change in our surroundings; to serve the world with a heart filled with the Gospel. We make this possible when we live with a sensitive heart. Spirituality and ethics help us to cultivate an attitude of openness and of serene attention, to have our “eyes open”.

We remember this small gesture of Marcellin. On August 12, 1816, the young priest stopped about 300 meters north of the village of La Valla. From there, he contemplated for a few moments nature and the houses lived in by many peasant families, whose situation he well knew because of where he himself had come from. He knelt down in silence, to entrust to God his ministry. As a reminder of this moment, he erected there a red cross. The time and the following years gave to Marcellin a penetrating gaze, beyond the superficial, which moved him to live in communion with

the needs and hopes of his people. He committed himself to his pastoral work and to the creation of a young congregation.

This transparent and deep gaze helps us to understand that the ultimate meaning of our actions is connected with the fundamental good of others, particularly in that which affects their well being or in what touches on their sufferings or their challenges. To be attentive and show empathy are the first steps in order to give ethical responses and to spiritually connect. We can find this deep connection in Pope John XXIII. His open and honest gaze and his naturalness enabled him to connect with the people, to understand real situations and to move the heart, revealing his inner depths and his gentle attitude, which even today fills us with emotion (John XXIII, 1962/2021). This earned him the title of “the good Pope”. It is told about him that after visiting an old people’s home, he was returning to the Vatican. On the way there, his secretary, pointed out the house of the editor of *L’Osservatore Romano* where his wife was very sick. The secretary asked the Pope if he could send out his blessing. The Pope responded immediately: “It is difficult to send a blessing through the air, Don Loris. Would it not be better to take it there personally?” Within a few minutes, without warning, which he usually did give, they were knocking at the door to be able to be with her and to give his blessing in person.” (Benito-Plaza, 2000, p. 73).

There is an iconic image of Pope Francis. It was the evening of March 27, 2020, and he went out walking in the rain to an empty St. Peter’s Square, going up the ramp to the dais in order to pray for humanity, which was suffering in the pandemic. The silence and the growing darkness which covered the square were symbolic of the pain of the world and of the city of Rome. When he spoke about the experience later, he said: «Walking alone like this, pondering on the loneliness of so many people... I was thinking inclusively with the head and the heart, together... I was thinking all this while I was walking...» (Ruiz, 2021, p. 1).

Three leaders, three situations, but the same attitude. From the previous examples it is clear that behind the facts, it is the people that stand out because they possess “a feeling heart”, an attentive and empathetic gaze, which is expressed by giving complete attention, which is deep, intuitive, inclusive, not focused on self, connected to the world and the planet. This attention represents a combination of the values and attitudes of love and solidarity, commitment and transformation, together with the spiritual disposition to be attentive to the inspiration of the Spirit, experienced both in daily life and in the extraordinary.

To live in today’s world profoundly requires, more than ever, a new kind of sensitivity, which is capable of “seeing and feeling” the grave changes that we are going through and the enormous ethical and spiritual dilemmas that crop up. This is done through being close to others. In a triple movement of “listening” attentively, “understanding” deeply and “proposing” wisely, the leadership can connect its actions and decisions with the core challenges that we experience in our times, in our societies, institutions and the Congregation.

Servant and prophetic leadership require this permanent connection with the internal and external reality. We stay close so that we can serve and serve better. With this predisposition, we care for others, and we move ahead in the process of transformation. These are two fundamental principles of service, the spiritual root of which we meet in the Incarnation:

Because that is the path that God has chosen in order to save us: closeness. He drew close to us, he made himself man. And indeed, God’s flesh is the sign; God’s flesh is the sign of true justice. God who made himself a man like one of us, and we who must make ourselves like the others, like the needy, like those who need our help. (Pope Francis, homily, October 31, 2014, p. 1)

Ask Yourself What For

Why can you not interpret the present time? Why do you not know how to judge for yourselves what you must do? (Lk 12, 54-59)

Servant leadership has a prophetic value when it offers meaningful answers to the contemporary world. This is the intuition of the XXII General Chapter of the Marist Brothers (2017). We are called to travel in the caravans and on the paths of life, in the emerging situations, in order to hold out the mercy of God and human fraternity.

We live in extraordinary times, both for the possibilities and the poverty. We confront situations what we could never have imagined and which radically affect what the present and the future of the planet and of life itself will be.

Humanity seems to be coexisting in parallel worlds and we seem to live in distinct historical epochs. While we make progress in a fourth industrial revolution and in the digital era, we can count on vast human and economic possibilities for developing improvements and surprising innovations, we can see just on the other side of the street or just a few kilometres away, people and communities that live in conditions of total precariousness, exclusion or poverty. The contrasts are so immense that they profoundly damage the conscience. The whole of humanity is living with a serious fracture and others derive from it, like the ecological issue, societal problems, culture, the economy, health, the geopolitical situation, intergenerational issues, or the gap between religion and spirituality. Pope Francis (Fratelli Tutti, n. 10–53) reflects deeply on the drama of our times, setting out certain aspects and challenges: (a) the breaking in pieces of dreams and social aspirations, together with a glance back at historical achievements and conquests; (b) the end of historical awareness and of the historical sense together with new forms of cultural colonization; (c) the lack of a plan for all, which provokes despair, distrust, exasperation,

worsening of the situation, polarization in societies, communities and families, and domination; (d) the throwaway culture, which rejects the poor, the disabled and the elderly, and places multitudes of human beings in misery and exposes them to exploitation, with new forms of poverty, racism xenophobia, and slavery; (e) human rights that are not sufficiently universal; (f) conflict and fear which allow new barriers of self-preservation to be erected, generating loneliness, insecurity and dependence, individualism, aggressivity, disinformation, manipulation, confusion, submission and self-loathing.

Fratelli Tutti (2020) launched an appeal to the world and to each one of us:

Let us return to promoting the good, for ourselves and for the whole human family, and thus advance together towards an authentic and integral growth. Every society needs to ensure that values are passed on; otherwise, what is handed down are selfishness, violence, corruption in its various forms, indifference and, ultimately, a life closed to transcendence and entrenched in individual interests. (n. 113)

Meditating on all of this, it is important to ask ourselves: Why and for what purpose do we lead? What kind of world do we desire to transform into and how can we do that? How can I make a real change in my circle of influence? What urgent good do we have to seek?

Sometimes, we lead in a prophetic way if we turn to dreams and social aspirations, inspiring the historical consciousness, and we promote a plan for everyone, fostering a culture of integration, and in this way, we consolidate human rights and are therefore builders of communion and trust.

Certainly, one does not lead in a vacuum. If I desire a model of society that is different, I must seek to bring it into being in my own school. If I desire a model of church that is different, first of all I must seek to

inspire it in my own religious or Christian community. If I construct spaces to protect human rights or for the integral care of creation surrounding me, I must seek to inspire the pupils or staff to do the same outside the institutional perimeters. Leadership is responsible for the ethical references it generates.

For us, an apostolic Institute, everything that has gone before makes up a horizon and a challenge. Our vocational DNA is designed to make a change in people's lives, especially in the lives of children and young people, the emarginated, in the communities and societies that surround us, as we mentioned previously. Without this internal conviction, our leadership loses sight of its horizon as well as its ethical and prophetic power. We need to have a certain judgement in regard to reality, insofar as is possible, in order to respond in the way that Marcellin did.

Ethical Competence with “an Upright Conscience and a Profound Judgement”.

To have an upright conscience is the task of a lifetime. In order to reach that point, various qualities need to be developed. These are connected to a variety of services, such as teacher, school principal or Provincial. Succinctly, there are three aspects which can help on this point: decision, praxis and ethical competence.

To lead is to decide, and for this reason, the challenge of deciding is to make good decisions a part of one's leadership. As a matter of fact, the moment of decision (Rodríguez-Matos, 2001) is a key point in all the reflection on leadership. There are circumstances where decisions are taken based on custom, tradition or habits. In other circumstances, a deliberate exercise has to take place to ascertain the appropriate options. The events, situations and context vary, and it is key to possess a degree of discernment, reflection and moral or ethical stature in order to put something into practice. This is not simple. Dilemmas and questions arise.

Some are practical, but others are responding to profound issues and are an invitation to ponder on what is fundamental. Surely, we will recognize ourselves when we read the following questions: Faced with a particular situation, how should I decide? What criteria should I adopt when making decisions, both personal and organizational? Am I consistent in my method of making decisions and do I reflect on it? On what basis do I make decisions? Do I base myself on authority, power or influence? What laws, protocols, procedures and rules should I fulfil before and during decision-making? How and with whom do I resolve any dilemmas that present themselves to me? Do I take sufficient time to reflect on what I do and how I do it? In what way and how do I include spiritual discernment in decision-making?

To lead is to act, and so, there is presumably a level of influence, authority and power, both in formal situations as in informal ones. Here we are approaching another type of question: Am I coherent in the way of applying decisions? What level of compromise am I happy with in agreed decisions? Do I use authority, power or the influence of acting correctly and ethically? What personal motives or principles underlie my actions? What ways do I have to manage or direct people? What kind of vigilance do I apply to myself, to my style of leadership and my ways of acting? What space do I leave in what I do for discernment and the prophetic?

For both scenarios -making decisions or praxis- it is important to develop ethical and spiritual sensitivity which helps us each day patiently to fine-tune and improve the way we lead. For this reason, recently, in the various formation programs on leadership, a part on “ethical competence” has been included, which means, formation in knowledge, procedures, and values in order to take decisions correctly, and for direction, performance and management. This competency develops a greater clarity around questions and moral dilemmas, and for the recognition of good practice.

García-Rincón (2021, p. 107) proposes five guiding points in order to achieve ethical competence. These are inspired by the multiple studies of Howard Gardner:

1. **Empathy-Universality:** I put myself in the situation of the other person, in his or her place, in a framework of empathy and universal meaning. This principle, reminds me in a certain way of the Marist pedagogical maxim: “Love all equally”.
2. **Assertiveness-Self-Control:** I express my point of view and values in a sure, clear and autonomous way, avoiding violence and strong language.
3. **Commitment-Responsibility:** I take on the commitments acquired with their rules, values, norms, protocols, regulations, or agreements; and so I act responsibly in the various areas of leadership.
4. **Person-oriented service:** I act proactively when faced with problems, needs, and the urgent necessities of other people, with a focus on service, and a generous, beneficent, harmonious, and attentive sense.
5. **Discernment-Reflection:** I carry out an adequate discernment when making decisions, which includes, in the first place, self-awareness in order to achieve a reasonable level of freedom, as well as self-reflection on one’s leadership, following questions like: Why? What could happen? Is this the whole truth? How and for what?

Ethical competence educates and strengthens throughout the different experiences. Therefore, it is important to include it in leadership formation and refresher courses or in courses for communities or study groups. Moreover, spiritual discernment, on which we will reflect a little later, is used as a process that seeks a greater awareness of the promptings of the Spirit and the call of the Gospel, which are fundamental to maintain the vitality and uniqueness of the charismatic Marist identity.

Development of an Ethical Institutional Culture

From ethical competence and formation for it, we now move forward towards the consolidation of an ethical institutional culture. Solomon (1996) says that “every culture possesses an ethic. In reality, it is possible to affirm that any culture is ethical, which includes elementary rules which protect it, even from itself” (p. 48). Developing or improving an ethical culture is to climb a new set of stairs.

Certainly, we have an established ethical culture which can always be being improved when we enter into dialogue with any emerging reality. During the last decades and within the Marist world, there have been very many conferences, workshops, and training groups set up to improve the institutional culture and to educate the participants to form an ethical sensitivity. In our days, we have numerous protocols, policies and procedures for different areas of activity. A good example is those relating to the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, which have been developed in all the Administrative Units (Provinces and Districts).

What can we do to develop this dimension more consciously? Here we mention some possibilities:

1. To share and agree on values, virtues, moral and ethical codes within our communities or Marist institutions.
2. Share experiences to clarify dilemmas that may arise, which could include the help of experts.
3. Establish an ongoing formation process, as was mentioned in relation to ethical competence.
4. Encourage interior motivation above the exterior motivation as well as transcendent values.
5. Offer modelling and mentoring which help to reinforce the processes and procedures, based on the ethical principles which have been adopted.
6. Improve practices with thought-provoking dialogues focused on real situations.
7. Revise the application of guidelines, policies, procedures; and ethical protocols for specific or generalized positions, and introduce improvements.
8. Constantly motivate and recognize achievements in the application and experience of institutional values and virtues.

As Marists, we are present in many activities: classes, youth groups of a pastoral nature, catechesis, schools, universities, religious communities, hospitals, houses of formation, or retreat centres. In each one of these activities, there are different dimensions and types of relationships: fraternal, work colleagues, social relationships, relationships with Church officials, principals, academic relationships, formation situations, and spiritual relationships. We need to ask ourselves about the ethical parameters that clarify with “profound judgement” this varied world of relationships and mission scenarios, with their specific characteristics in order to live these experiences well and to ensure that the protection of rights and good practice are guaranteed.

As Brothers and Sisters: Group Loyalty (Esprit de Corps)

Such a reaction was short-lived, however, giving way to confidence and affection after one listened to him for a few minutes; for beneath that slightly harsh and somewhat stern exterior, he concealed the happiest of characters. (Furet, 1856/1989, p. 273)

There is a television series entitled “New Amsterdam” (David Schulner, 2018). The plot takes place in a hospital (*Bellevue Hospital*), in New York. The protagonist, Dr. Max Goodwin, a young medical director, repeats the following question as if it were a *leitmotif*: “How can I help?” In every situation which presents itself, whether it is his dealings with the staff in general or when an issue arises with an individual nurse, he keeps asking: “How can I help?” By means of this attitude, he manages progressively to change the mentality of the doctors and other medical staff, until he transforms the institution so that it actually responds to its fundamental mission as a public hospital. As he walks along the corridors, making contact with the people or in meetings of the board, he becomes a symbol of enterprise and closeness. He offers an alternative point of view and creative solutions to help the patient. He also recaptures the value of

working together and the sense of community and he takes risks in order to be able to make improvements. He shows himself to be compassionate to the suffering of others. He respects the people he leads. Throughout the whole process, he brings the medical faculty and many others together around a common ideal. This generates a sense of intimacy, collaboration and teamwork.

Dahlin & Schoeder (2021) stress the following traits in order to strengthen morale and the feeling of being a team: faithfulness to the group and to its values or aspirations, enthusiasm, motivation, loyalty, resilience, the will to serve and the attitudes of service. When it happens, one can observe a strong horizontal feeling which enriches everyone, helps them and perpetuates a collaborative culture which can last or increase the efficiency and effectiveness in oneself or others.

Thinking about Marcellin, we see a strong connection between his leadership and the sense of community or team. His own history and of the first brothers is full of stories about the key role of trust based on a mutual affection, that involves everyone. Our Founder transmits this very well in his correspondence, which is full of tender expressions and details of his closeness to people. In the *Spiritual Testament* (Institute of the Marist Brothers, 2021) his profound desires for community and for each brother are expressed, particularly stressing the founding values of our life. The *Rule of Life* (2021) expresses this very beautifully:

Brother, recall that Laurent, François, Stanislas, Sylvestre,
and the other members of the first Marist community, held close
to their hearts the memory of Marcellin
as a father who cared for them like a mother. (n. 84)

As Marists, the sense of community and the team spirit have a profound impact in everything we do and is a characteristic of the Marist “way” of acting which is expressed in concrete practices. Thus, the document, *Water from the Rock* (Institute of Marist Brothers, 2007), says:

The terms brother and sister express in a very rich way the Marist style of relating. A brother or a sister is one who is approachable, unassuming and authentic, attentive and respectful. Brothering and sistering are ways of relating that affirm others and inspire in them confidence and hope. (n. 119)

Act with our Marist Practical Sense

Many of the processes or experiences when it comes to being a leader are closely connected to our scale of ethical and moral values, both personal as well as in relation to the group. If we briefly analyse these, we can observe that they are part of an established ethical conception or dimension, which can vary according to the issue to be considered. On occasions, we conduct ourselves guided by essential principles related to fundamental virtues adjusted to our common moral and spiritual code; at other times, we follow practical or legal reasons, because of the circumstances; yet other times, we act following an analysis of the consequences; then, we act on the level of wellbeing or happiness or comfort which our actions bring about; finally, we sometimes act because it is important from the spiritual point of view. We try to avoid or eliminate discrepancies or, at least, to diminish them.

In our normal day-to-day activity, we are used to acting and integrating these different perspectives with a greater emphasis on some of them. We seek to act by adjusting what we do to our principles, which will be in harmony with our spiritual tradition as Marists. In this way we seek a good outcome of wellbeing or happiness, making sure that the outcome is legal, practical and attainable. Dilemmas always make us not just consider what is good or bad, correct or incorrect, from the ethical point of view, but rather to prioritize from several possible positive solutions. Although we have a stable framework of values, decisions often involve a lot of dialogue. It is a matter of choosing well by bringing together our intelligence, guided by our moral principles, and the necessary degree of wisdom.

“You must be clever as snakes and innocent as doves” (Mt 10, 16). This appeal of the Gospel is important for leadership as there is no opposition between simplicity of life and the use of one’s intelligence and abilities for leadership in a complex world. As a matter of fact, it would be absurd and very negative to turn our backs on the knowledge, tools, and capacity that exist in the XXI century in relation to leadership and the development of organizations, societies, communities or groups. This does not mean that there will be situations –and here is the element of prophecy – that force us to take important and fundamental decisions, even though they may contradict custom, tradition, or the norms which are socially acceptable.

Virtuous Circles

He had a **firm, enthusiastic** character... (Furet, J. B., p. 39)

This characteristic of Champagnat, which has a psychological, and also an ethical dimension, allows us to enter into the reflection on the virtues of leadership. In this way, we will be able to recognize their importance. For Rebores (2001), the virtues are:

... qualities which outline the true centre of what a person is. The virtues are flexible and adapt to the surroundings in which the person must operate. The virtues outline human inclinations and dispositions to act in a determined manner. The virtues are integrated into the emotional and intellectual life of an individual in such a way as to arrive at an ethical judgement with ease. The virtues must be cultivated with time in order to facilitate a certain way of acting. (pp. 29-30)

Stephen Covey (Covey, 1998) adds that these permanent principles can be at the center of the person or organization and they bring forth a system of values which inform and guide decisions.

In our Marist history, there are clear examples of leaders who are models of different virtues: apostolic generosity, bravery, equilibrium, wisdom, honesty, compassion, integrity, freedom, commitment to community or the defence of the weakest. Certainly, specific names of people will come to our minds who incarnate or who did incarnate these virtues. Each one emphasized certain aspects which they developed throughout their lives in a variety of forms:

Ethical leadership demands that each person makes clear what really matters in his life, which is that he is determined to make decisions about things that he can affect and on this will depend also his way of communicating. In this way we see what are his priority values (in a hierarchy of values) and how he conducts himself in order to live a successful life which, either in the short or long term, will have an impact on the development of the abilities of those who work with him. (Sonnenfeld, 2021, pos. 208)

Lawton and Paéz (2015) carried out a major study of the virtues that stood out for the investigators. From this study, the following emerged. They are grouped by similar themes:

- Integrity, which in the words of Bennis (2000) is the primary quality of a leader.
- Authenticity and honesty.
- Trustworthiness and credibility.
- Humility and a forgiving nature.
- Wisdom.
- Prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.
- Passion, enthusiasm and bravery.
- Responsibility and determination.
- Service or helpfulness and altruism.
- Ability to be an example of a lifestyle
- Empowering.
- Humour.

- Appreciation for others, kindness, tolerance, compassion and love.

All of them have a high value, whether at the personal or group level. However, which ones have a special relevance when people work in teams or are directing organizations? On which virtues would it be good to focus in order to improve how we act or even to transform it? Which ones are important to stress in an institutional culture? Let us briefly analyse the four which represent a virtuous circle when joined to professionalism and a capacity to direct organizations: authenticity/humility, honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.

The virtue of authenticity/humility. The definition from the Dictionary of the Royal Academy for Language (RAE, 2021) is: “Consistent with oneself, and showing on the outside what is within”. This virtue helps towards knowledge of oneself, either personally or within a group, and as a leader to be able to act transparently, according to the principles, beliefs, and values that have been taken on. It is related to self-awareness, self-control, being consistent with one’s own values and acting in a way that is in harmony with who one is. Authenticity encourages transparent relationships and creates a positive climate in teams, the community or the institution. Authenticity and humility are related to each other as both recognize their own limits, difficulties and errors or qualities, successes and achievements. In positions of leadership, where it is possible to unconsciously accumulate a lot of ego, this double dimension of authenticity and humility brings about a virtuous circle when one knows how to work as part of a team, as one recognizes the value of others and accepts what one knows or does not know in the different areas of life or work. Someone who is authentic, professionally competent or vocationally solid, creates a circle of virtue which improves everyone and everything around him with a profound sense of humility and a constant growth of his authenticity.

Very closely united to authenticity and humility is the virtue of honesty, which is one of the qualities most recognized in leaders. This is connected to personal and social credibility.

The virtue of integrity. This consists in the coherence or consistency between being and doing. It means to live in a unified way. Integrity towards people and institutions generates stability and security. The application of codes, norms, principles and values is part of acting in an integrated way. Therefore, it is in a close relationship with justice. Integrity is fundamental to be a leader.

According to Clawson (1999), we can live a life of integrity in four essential ways: to speak the truth, keep promises, be fair and respect the individual. What people appreciate is a leader with sufficient courage to be honest, even in difficult, potentially damaging situations, or in regard to one's own limitations or deficiencies.

The virtue of trustworthiness is at the root of all forms of leadership. Without this virtue, it is very complicated to create an ambience of collaboration and service. It is a vital attribute in relationships with and between people. To create, sustain and consolidate relationships, trustworthiness becomes one of the most significant factors in a healthy way of relating, and it plays a key role in teamwork, improving effectiveness and productivity (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). Trustworthiness in groups, communities, teams and institutions is arrived at, in the same way, when care is shown for people, along with honesty and integrity. De Pree (1997) affirms that "trustworthiness grows when people see that leaders are able to translate their personal integrity into an organizational fidelity" (p. 127). Henn (2009) expresses the same idea with great clarity:

It might seem perfectly obvious that these traits are beneficial, but why is the human factor so important? The reason is trustworthiness. The common factor of these attributes is the element of trust. Self awareness is to trust in oneself. Communication and connection

create personal trust between individuals and the greater the comprehension about the impact of the organization in the community creates trust with the interested parties, both in the present as well as in the future. If we consider the role of the leader in its greatest abstraction, the most important work in leadership is to construct and maintain trust. (p. 102-103)

Marist Ethical and Prophetic Stories

Sonnenfeld (2021) affirms, in an interesting article on ethics and leadership that calls for some introspection:

A specific perspective of the ethics of leadership, that we might define as learning to live in a way that my existence reaches the fulness to which it is destined in its totality. This is something that does not depend on changing circumstances or who holds power. It depends on me, what my fundamental way of being is, the things that identify me, what aspirations I have, the possibilities available to me, and what path I must follow to achieve a successful life. (pos. 181)

To learn how to live fully while being of service can be expressed in six profoundly ethical and spiritual dimensions: caring, sense of responsibility, sustainability, critical vision, self giving, and justice.

Care for life is one of the fundamentals of the Gospel of Jesus and of the Christian way of life as well as a common principle in the great religions. The respect for life on earth in all its expressions can be found in the majority of ancient cultures. This care is especially relevant when it refers to the smallest, the defenceless, the fragile, or those who have been “discarded”.

On May 14, 2019, Br. Ernesto and I were present at the unveiling of the plaque which identifies the San Leone Magno Institute of Rome

(Italy) as the House of Life. This is a recognition of The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, 2019, which honoured the actions of Brother Alessandro Di Pietro and the Marist Community during the Second World War. With bravery and at the risk of their own lives, they hid many children and adults from the Nazis and the Fascists. Previously, on July 16, 2001, the Commission for awarding the prize, *Righteous Among the Nations*, gave this title to Br. Alessandro. At that time, he himself gave thanks for this honour conferred by the State of Israel, and he said:

I give thanks and accept this recognition, but not for me, but as a representative of all those Brothers of the San Leone Magno Institute who made up the community. In fact, it was a decision of the community to open the doors to the 24 young Jewish children and a dozen adults. All the members of the community were part of this, some in one way and some in another, even though we knew that we ran a great risk. (Institute of Marist Brothers, 2019, p. 1).

The President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, an ex-pupil of the San Leone Magno Institute, sent a beautiful message to those present at the ceremony. In his letter, he gave a brief mention to something that seems very important in the actions of Br. Alessandro: “He never boasted to anyone about his very brave work of protecting human life, because he considered it part of his mission as a human being and as a religious” (Institute of Marist Brothers, 2019, p. 1).

The leadership of Br. Alessandro has something to say to us today. I just mention one of the elements:

1. The first step in becoming a leader is to be a good person. It is not necessary to be perfect but is sufficient to be really human. Your personality, more than your position, makes fundamental decisions depend finally on your sensitivity towards humanity, and in concrete, towards your neighbour.

2. You will show great humility in all your actions because you consider it part of your “mission as a human being and as a religious” (or as a Christian or citizen, man or women).
3. You will choose to care for the life of others even if risk is involved, and on occasions, risking your life for another person. “We knew that we were running a great risk”.
4. You will feel called to do something for others: “all the members of the community agreed with the decision”. This is something that is very Marist. It is part of our family spirit.
5. Service, compassion, love of neighbour will emerge within you as a natural ethical and spiritual background.

In daily life, we show forth the dimension of care in a multiplicity of forms, in the way we care for our mission, and in the experience of community or fraternity. Langlois (2011) says that the ethics of care move us towards managing with people rather than managing people. We are inspired to nourish and promote the values of esteem, loyalty and mutual respect. Within organizations, we deliberately create a healthy ambience with regard to relationships and a culture of care is encouraged which helps all to achieve the good and their wellbeing.

Eisenbeiss (2012) connects this care for life to two additional values: **the sense of responsibility and the orientation towards sustainability**. Long-term vision is central when we think of actual important and urgent aspects such as, the global wellbeing of society and the earth, the impact of our decisions on future generation, and the concept of a sustainable leadership that goes beyond self-interest.

Care also includes a choice for personal attention, which is important for a style of leadership that is built on virtue. Br. Ernesto (Sánchez Barba, 2020) expressed this in the following way:

Only when we take good care of our inner spiritual journey, do we have the capacity to develop healthy and lasting relationships

and, therefore, focus on caring for others. When we feel cared for by God, by others and by ourselves, we can turn our attention to others. When the opposite is the case, it is hard to give of ourselves freely and generously. We have to understand better the meaning of “*love your neighbour as yourself*” (Mt 22: 39) and put it into practice. (Mt 22: 39). (p. 35)

The antithesis of the ethics of care is the neglect of life, that of others and creation, in all its forms. It is the attitude behind Cain’s words: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gn 4, 9). It is important to avoid some defects in management, like excessive familiarity (which is different from the value of a sense of family), especially when freedom to make decisions is curtailed or turned into very personal considerations or preoccupations. When personal wellbeing becomes the central principle for action, one loses the dimensions of service and enters into a dynamic of “taking advantage” of the organization for other purposes, according to Langlois (2011)

Critical sense. It is easy to find photographs of Nelson Mandela greeting the brothers of the community in the Marist College of the Sacred Heart in Johannesburg. Mandela was an “habitual” grandfather of the school which he would enter to collect his granddaughter. Br. Joe Walton described the scene:

when he passed by the school, he stopped to chat with everyone he saw, whether they were teachers, cleaners or other workers, to tell them how glad he was to see them. This made people very comfortable with him. He never saw the presidency as something that gave him superiority over other people but rather as an opportunity to serve other people. He was very sensitive about who was worried and he showed great compassion for the welfare of everyone. We could not but feel that we were in the presence of someone very spiritual, because he was focused on making people feel good and special. (Walton, 2020, p. 1)

Mandela played a fundamental role in overthrowing the system imposed by apartheid, a political system based on the separation of races. He was the clearest example of a very wide social, political and religious movement. Like Mandela, Brother Jude Pieterse, Provincial at that time, and the Marist community made the delicate decision to defy this segregation and accept people of all races, including when the State tried to impede them. “In this battle, between the Church and the State, Br. Jude played an important role” (Walton, 2020). Already in 1957, the Conference of Bishops of Southern Africa had made the following declaration:

The practice of segregation is not recognized in our churches, and is not a characteristic of our ecclesial communities, our schools, our seminaries, convents, hospitals or the life of our people. In the light of the teaching of Christ, this cannot be tolerated forever. (Walton, 2020, p. 1)

The decision of the brothers to accept everyone links us with our principle of education: “To love everyone equally” and expands it with a wider view. On some occasions, as in South Africa, this presumes pulling down legal and cultural barriers, and to overcome deep-rooted and visceral issues like xenophobia and racism. These decisions require strength of character, personal conviction, courage, and assuming the risk that is involved. The ethical and spiritual imperative opens a way before the circumstances dictated or whatever form of the use of power that finally slips into a systematic oppression or a constant exclusion. In this situation, to love everyone equally meant to ensure equality and actively seek inclusion. In the field of education, we know that this means to offer an equality of opportunities, and of quality for everyone.

This history shows us various ethical and spiritual elements that would be good to stress for all leaders. A style of leadership which:

1. Underpins the value of justice and compassion, particularly faced with inequality, segregation which hurts those who live on the edge, either

- geographically or existentially.
2. Fosters courage to transform reality with concrete action, which can even be radical.
 3. Affirms the fundamental conviction of the value of each person, of every child, and every young person, without any discrimination, as sons and daughters of God.
 4. Take the decision to put all children in the first place, no matter what are their characters, situations or history.
 5. Reaffirm protection and care as central values in regard to children and young people, creating a proactive culture. This care is to be extended to all the people who are within their circle of influence.
 6. Foster work which is done with others and collaboratively, which leads to agreement on what is good, on justice, and human development, so that we can achieve a greater impact by means of consensus and organizations within the Church and with other churches, as well as making an impact on society together with other entities.

Thinking more about the above, we can delve a little into their meanings. Mandela, Br. Jude, the Marist community and the Church in South Africa ... overcame numerous challenges and difficulties, with the Gospel in their hearts and with a great feeling for humanity, notwithstanding controversies and conflicts. This story takes us into the critical ethical orientation, which consists in identifying, within any given situation, the relations with power, submission or exclusion, the relationships of domination and oppression, the relationships of benefit versus detriment. The strength of events provokes a qualitative leap forward from a moral innocence towards a complete awareness of political and social facts, of privileges, interests, influences, biased laws or unjust traditions, as is pointed out by (Langlois, 2011). Looking critically at reality, decisions which are taken are an attempt to promote a greater level “of equity and justice” based not on a group struggle but rather on the common dignity of all human beings and of all as sons and daughters of God. The document, *Water from the Rock* (2007) serves to reaffirm what has been mentioned from the spiritual perspective:

Our Marist charism prompts us to be attentive to the calls of our time, to the longings and preoccupations of people, especially the young. Surpassing religious and cultural borders we seek the same dignity for all: human rights, justice, peace, and equitable and responsible sharing of the planet's wealth (n. 128)

Self-giving. The sense of service that Marcellin had was profound. The care for his parishioners, his community that was taking shape and the growth of the schools reveal a great personal commitment and gift of himself. He tirelessly went round his parish, as well as the schools and communities that had been recently founded. In the same way, he stressed an attitude in favour of missions which crossed frontiers. His desire was to reach every diocese of the world. Reading the foundational history, we can glimpse a great generosity in the French brothers who left for many places “without a return ticket”. Also we can observe the same thing in generations of missionary brothers and lay volunteers who, in our own day continue to bear witness to this self-giving. In the same way, there are wonderful stories of commitment in daily life, millions of stories of “anonymous heroes”, preachers of good without making much noise about it.

Giving thanks is a Gospel precept. For this, it is necessary to cultivate the quality of knowing how to give: a gift of time and of one's life which goes beyond what is obligatory or what has been paid for. It is also an attitude of the heart, which helps us not to invade the other's space or to act like a conqueror. It requires learning to offer oneself without creating dependencies. It assumes gratuitousness. This attitude is that which Pope Francis calls for when he asks leaders to give of themselves freely (Pope Francis, 2019) and which Francesc Torralba (2010) identifies with three actions: do not pass by, stop and respond to the call of the other person. I would dare to add one more: empower.

Sometimes, this invitation finds space in our Marist hearts:

We are called to give what we are, to reveal what we have within us to the world and to others. We are gift and we have been made to be a gift. Only in this movement of going out can happiness be rooted. To understand one's existence from the logic of gift means to realize that the essential end of living is to give what one is. (Torralba, 2012)

There are some elements that can inspire us:

1. To begin with a style of leadership that authentically serves. This is what motivates people with the desire to give their best and to give generously.
2. To create a culture of disinterested service, which means to encourage communities to multiply the good by means of their commitment, especially to those who are most in need. This includes, not passing by, but getting involved and responding to the call of the other person however this comes.
3. To create the conditions where people do not become dependent, which is to say, an effective empowerment so that individuals and organizations can be capable of acting freely and to seek what is good for them effectively.
4. To develop a profound vocational sense in everything one does, in professional life, as in the spiritual, humanitarian, or social life. This is vocation in its pure state.

Sense of justice. Brother Moisés Cisneros was the principal of the Marist School, in an area on the outskirts of the city of Guatemala, when he was martyred on April 29, 1991. He knew very well the situations of poverty and violence which people were living through at the time of various wars in the whole Central American region. He also knew from first hand and was able to put a name to the faces of many people who were violently and unjustly treated or killed. He celebrated Holy Week, together with the young people of the *Movimiento REMAR*. During the Paschal Vigil, he proclaimed the Easter message (March 30, 1991), which invited

people to resurrection in the midst of so much death. In the message he denounced what was happening in society with a prophetic voice. This was the most notable event before his martyrdom. Moisés had been actively involved throughout his life in the service of the poorest in all sorts of places. In Chichicastenango (Quiché, Guatemala), he experienced a persecuted, martyred, humble and Samaritan church. As principal, he worked for the educational dignity of the poorest people, whom he literally sought out, along with the teachers, in the tin and cardboard houses of the surrounding areas in order to offer them a place and to enrol them in the “Marist School”. He was not without internal and external tensions, but he always maintained his spiritual and ethical compass, his sense of solidarity with the poor and needy and his commitment to the Gospel.

Together with him, we can mention the martyrs of Bugobe, the brothers in Algeria, the Blue Marists of Aleppo (Siria),... When we contemplate the human depth and spiritual roots of all these stories, we can discover the reason for which the Marists decided to remain in the mission of Bugobe at the risk of their lives; or their perseverance in Algeria or China; or why they crossed over bridges in the midst of the devastation of Aleppo in order to create communion. They all shared a fundamental ethical and spiritual root which shows us the value and witness of their leadership of prophetic service. We can affirm along with them that ethics are not a panacea, but rather, at times, involve a great risk in order to arrive at justice, as the Gospel shows us.

The ethics of justice (Rawls, 1971/1999) emerge strongly in these stories. The protection of the rights of the person and of the common good underlie the authentic exercise of leadership. In a school or a Province, acting with justice, the conditions are created so that everyone feels respected, within a structure of norms and established and clear principles. With dialogue and debate, people are involved in the process, are consulted and agreements are developed. With them, it is possible to develop responsible autonomy, an open interchange, subsidiarity, cooperation and the creation of a just order within and outside the group, community, or institution.

On the other hand, it will be important to prevent the problems that block exchange, open communion and trust. “Lack of trust, manipulation, aggressivity, control of actions or language by a group of leaders can lead to a relationship that becomes hypocritical, dishonest, disloyal, vicious and dehumanizing” (Starrat, 1991, p. 196). On the contrary, justice implies transparency in management and government, the fostering of the common good, duty, and responsibility.

Spiritual Itineraries in Times of Uncertainty

Important decisions were entrusted to God; Marcellin prayed and reflected as he sought to know God's will and to apply it to his present situation. (RL, 84)

All that has been said previously is strongly connected with the spiritual dimension, which is a basic foundation to understand Marist leadership. Many characteristics have already been mentioned in this and other chapters of this book, including the Marist, biblical or Marian foundation. I will not repeat these elements but I do want to point out in what follows some spiritual dynamics that can help us in our personal journey. Sometimes, I will even introduce us to new dimensions.

A brother, who regularly attends spiritual direction, told me that he is always surprised by the question repeated by his spiritual director: **“In all of this, where is God?”** He said, “I always end up by realizing the importance of this question that distracts me and centers me at the same time”. “Sometimes, I do not have an answer; at other times, it is obvious and there is no escape. There He is. God is right there.”

God is present throughout the whole of our life journey. Therefore, in talking of the spiritual dimension, we are referring to life itself, at various levels. These can transform leadership into an intimate expression of our fidelity to the movements of the Spirit. It is not always simple. Sometimes we make mistakes or deceive ourselves. At other times, we are right. What

is sure is that it is necessary to listen a great deal, to pray and to dialogue. There is a progression and each day it is refined. Probably, this would be the innermost part of your journey as a Marist leader.

To facilitate this journey, here are some keys that could be of use:

1. Disposition to **interior care** of yourself as leader. This includes a constant perseverance in the experience of God, both personally and in community. A constant vigilance over oneself is part of this too. Therefore, it is necessary to lead from a deep place within yourself with a greater self-awareness and self-direction. This means to recognize our inner journey, our emotions and thoughts, in order to embrace with wisdom our responsibility in life, so that we will be able to manage ourselves in an adequate manner, through the necessary means of physical and psychological equilibrium, spiritual life and counselling or psycho-spiritual direction. This is especially evident when there are deep tensions or moments of intense difficulty. As servant leaders, we increase our “awareness”, “attention to the present moment” and openness to help to respond to the needs of others..
2. **Vocational awareness**: with a constant **reference to the person of Jesus and the Kingdom**, the inspiring principle of all Marist and Christian leadership. Jesus is teacher and servant. He invites us to follow him and he calls us to be fishers of human beings (Mk 1, 17). To follow Jesus is to preach freely in the cities and the towns; it is to announce freely the content of the Gospel. In the passion for the Kingdom, everything comes together in unity, attains its true meaning and has power. The Kingdom leads to freedom and requests it. From the Kingdom of God there emerges the life together of a reconciled and missionary community (Jn 1, 19-28; Mt 3, 7-10), which can find value, sense and depth in its life and commitment. This radical life of the community of Jesus is open to disciples of both sexes and generates a new kind of kinship. For a charismatic global family, like ours, there is a constant call to a creative fidelity, both from the brothers and from

the lay associates, according to the particular vocation.

3. Disposition to live in a **discerning and prophetic way**, in order to learn to listen, understand, present and live according to God's will. It lies in our hands to act in such a way that we seek what God asks of us. There is no progress in real liberty and responsibility, without this discernment of our thoughts, of the spirit and intuitions that guide us in our decisions. If we do it well, there will come forth a prophetic attitude, which will be closely connected with the Kingdom: the prophetic attitude of compassion, of the construction of bridges, of fraternity, and of friendship. With our style of leadership, beyond any specifically urgent issues, we dream of a better future for all, knowing how to separate the wheat from the chaff, to distinguish the signs of the times. We are invited to be leaders, capable of getting things moving, of being concerned, of touching the hearts and minds of people, of "begging" for change. "It involves taking responsibility for the present with its situations of utter marginalization and anguish, and being capable of bestowing dignity upon it" (Fratelli Tutti, 188). It means having a moral and ethical compass at hand. Remembering the XXII General Chapter (2017), the major and permanent questions that accompany this discernment will be: *What does God want us to be and what does God want us to do in this world that is emerging?*
4. Disposition to progressively develop an attitude of metanoia, which is a change of mentality in what we understand as true happiness and success, particularly regarding to leadership (Mt 5, 3-12; Lk 6, 20-26). This metanoia helps us to grow in humility and in solidarity, to free ourselves interiorly and to live as poor in spirit, to hunger for justice, to be compassionate, simple, close to those who suffer and to the poor, to be pure of heart, sincere, constructors of peace and reconciliation. With these elements, Jesus introduces us to an exercise of leadership which is transformative in three aspects: personal integrity, compassion for the other, and the search for the will of God.

5. Disposition to serve and **“to see beyond the horizon”**, knowing that our actions have an effect and that we must cultivate a permanent attitude of hope. The spiritual leaders of our time, like Pope Francis, offer a vision of the present moment, of its meaning and how we might adapt ourselves and prepare for a different kind of future, through a constant challenge from the values and principles of the Gospel. “Servant leadership must therefore be aware – not pretentious –, of what the effect of our actions will be on everyone and everything around us and that it is much greater than we often consider and does not always correlate with the position that we hold” (García, 2019, p. 15) We have the wonderful story narrated by Sharma (2019), when he affirms the value of leadership “without any title”, as the foundation of all honest service.
6. Disposition to **abandon any paralysis for mission**. As in many examples from the Gospel, paralysis, weariness and apathy can spoil our joy, motivation, and commitment. In a time of complexity, servant leaders are capable of running risks, particularly those that are essential for mission and a life that bears fruit.
7. Disposition to **live the spirit of the beatitudes**. Humility, the gift of oneself, conversion, detachment, vulnerability, incomprehension, failure, and suffering can accompany us in some stages of leadership. To live through adversity and in the difficult moments of life with an attitude of resilience, an attentive conscience, and a vivid faith, reminds us that the Kingdom requires effort and faithfulness, but it also contains within itself a promise of fullness and of hope.

A Test of Truth

At the end of this reflection on ethics and spirituality, I would like to put forward these questions of Greenleaf (1970/2021) to be pondered. He raises them in his definition of servant leadership. I suggest that you

allow these to resonate within you, because they are full of meaning and will help you understand whether or not your way is the right one:

The best test, and difficult to administer, is:

Do those served grow as persons?

Do they, while being served,

become healthier,

wiser,

freer,

more autonomous,

more likely themselves to become servants?

And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society;

will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?

A Word for Those on The Journey

During the difficult transition after the Second Vatican Council, Br. Basilio Rueda was a source of inspiration and vision. The Institute experienced a profound and radical change. His moral and spiritual leadership, united with his personal gifts and his profound intellect, made him into an extraordinarily prophetic and servant figure. Br. Paul Ambrose said:

In this difficult aftermath of the Council the Church is living, the Institute needs a brother who is able to sail through the rough sea of ideas, without clear navigation charts, without immovable points of reference..... (Brambila, 2016, p. 9)

In our days we are living through complicated situations that are emerging. Brothers and lay people together, as a global family, are managing this navigation. Each of us, inspired by our Marist spiritual tradition feel a profound call to serve and to be the first to serve. Let us cultivate a rich spirituality which takes us into the heart of our mission and

of contemporary life in order to live as Gospel people. Let us grow, in these times of doubt, basing ourselves on the virtues and values that have made us Marists. This will always remain a prophetic aspiration. Let us enjoy the opportunity of being leaders and let us do it with the passion of our ethical and spiritual Marist vocation.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the values and essential virtues which define you as a person in your various positions of service?
2. How can you develop your ethical and spiritual competence (or some elements) in order to better respond to a world in constant change?
3. What aspects do you need to develop to create an ethical culture in your surroundings, that is more solid and consistent, and in harmony with the reality of contemporary life?
4. What are the principal ethical and spiritual challenges which you experience personally, socially, and within the Church? In your task of leadership, how can you give some answer to these from the perspective of care, justice, sustainability, responsibility, and critical vision?
5. How can your spirituality grow in a sense of mission or how can you integrate mission into your spirituality?

ABBREVIATION

WR	Water from the Rock
C	Constitutions of the Marist Brothers of the Schools
FT	Fratelli Tutti
RL	Rule of life of the Marist Brothers

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PART V

PERSPECTIVES
TRAINING

CHAPTER 21



Training and Lifelong Learning for an Emerging World

Br. "Chano" Guzmán Moriana
Mission Delegate for the Marist
Province of Mediterránea
(2016-2022)

Chris Lowney (2018) recounts in chapter 5 of his book *Everyone Leads*, in which he describes his strategy for revitalising the Church, the following anecdote which I have summarised:

I've more than once flown over the Alps as an airline passenger, and the majestic peaks invariably tingle my spine [...] but what if I were dropped into the Alpine wilderness during a snowstorm? Would I be brave enough to struggle forward [...] or, after a few hopeless steps, lie down to die? That's more or less the choice, we're told, that confronted a small military platoon during World War I. Dispatched on a short scouting mission into Alpine terrain, they were caught by an unpredicted snowstorm that raged for two days; they were lost, freezing, terrified, and lacking just about everything needed to survive.

Everything, that is, except a map. Not that they could readily situate themselves. Lost tourists in Manhattan can orient themselves by street signs [...], but the Alps aren't signposted. The soldiers knew they were on a mountain, just like mountains that stretch in every direction. Still, even though they could not precisely pinpoint their starting point, the map's promise of a way forward boosted their confidence. They guessed at their coordinates and headed in the direction that seemed most viable. They encountered obstacles and dead ends, adjusted their route along the way, and eventually made it to safety.

The story lives on today mostly because of its ironic punch line. That map that helped those soldiers out of the Alps? It wasn't a map of the Alps; it was a map of the Pyrenees, a fact that only became apparent to them after they reached safety.

In all our administrative units throughout history, various training policies have been defined that have been key to the Provinces' progress. The programmes established have guided us and helped us find our way through the mountainous path of our history and have given us

common objectives and content as well as a shared awareness of keeping Champagnat's dream alive.

1. Introduction

All our Marist documents are full of mentions of the importance of training, one of the pillars on which the present and future of our life and mission as Champagnat Marists is based.

St. Marcellin focused his efforts on providing his followers with human and spiritual training during his early years in the mountain village of La Valla and also at the Hermitage, which, from the moment of its construction, served as an established training centre for the Brothers (MEM, 2003, no. 15)¹. And, in the subsequent development of our history, the summers of training, the practical lessons given by the leader Brothers to the novice teachers² (Marist Brothers, 1853), the initial and continuous training programmes, the specialist courses for those in charge of the different areas, and a multitude of training activities – that “home-baked bread, rich and plentiful, bread which has nourished and will continue to nourish many generations” (Sánchez Barba, 2020, p. 18) – have also helped improve training for Marist Brothers and laypersons.

The XXII General Chapter (2017) called us to gain a deeper insight into our ever-changing world, a world that is being defined by four of its principal features: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This obliges today's leaders to deal with hyper-connectivity, the globalisation of economic, health, political issues, etc., the impossibility to control information and communication flows and channels, the interconnection of people, systems, resources and geographies, and so on. (Poznynek, 2015)

This situation presents us with a challenging scenario, similar to that which Marcelino had to face in his time. And we are all asked to provide the means necessary to promote servant leadership in the Institute in the belief that *we are all leaders*. “In this rapidly changing world we will

only accomplish our mission if a critical mass of us respond to the calling of leadership given to us when we are baptised.” (Lowney, 2018)

Below we offer some reflections on the KIND OF TRAINING we need to provide in order to strengthen our servant and prophetic leadership, the FORMAT we are currently working with, and the importance of continuous LIFELONG learning.

2. What Kind of Training?

There are many studies that attempt to analyse how the labour market will evolve in the coming years, as well as a proliferation of lists of skills required by this market, now referred to as post-Covid owing to the evident impact the pandemic has had on it. The World Economic Forum’s The Future of Jobs Report (2018) sets out the results of its study, highlighting a whole range of soft skills that should be developed in the coming years to meet the demands of the labour market. These are as follows:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation
2. Active learning and learning strategies
3. Complex problem-solving
4. Critical thinking
5. Creativity, originality and initiative
6. Leadership and social influence
7. Technology use
8. Technology design and programming
9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
10. Reasoning and problem-solving

Indeed, in this VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world we live in, training in these skills is necessary for consistency in leadership. To complement our current training for Marist leaders, this new kind of training should have the following characteristics:

1. Understand that WE ARE ALL LEADERS

There are many people who are natural leaders, but all of us are called to exercise servant and prophetic leadership in our environment. It is not only the task of those who hold positions of responsibility for any period of time.

2. Foster a SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Our life and mission start with a personal commitment, but with the acceptance that there is ‘value for me beyond me’. The sense of community reminds us that:

There are missional challenges that I cannot meet on my own, there is something I need from others in order to develop what I have been created to do. [...] is whether we are ready to be part of something bigger than ourselves. (Villanueva, 2019)

3. COMPETENCY-BASED

All people with management responsibility or leadership capacity must help and work with the whole of our organisation “to learn to learn”, to unlearn, to innovate, to collaborate, to develop all their talent and to deploy all their personal, technical, relational and digital skills...³. (Culturaprendizaje, 2020)

4. Be EXPERIENTIAL

Learning is no longer about amassing mountains of knowledge in order to accumulate external recognition accrediting it. Learning is now about incorporating emerging knowledge flows into your day-to-day life with a transdisciplinary mentality. 70% of learning comes from experience, experimentation and reflection; 20% from working with others and the remaining 10% from formal training. (Cañigueral Bagó, 2020)

5. Enhance COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

This is achieved through greater cooperation and participation. It allows us to address current problems and anticipate future challenges by sharing and drawing on the knowledge and experience we have in our personal and community history.

6. Attract and promote TALENT

The most talented person is the one who lives with the humility to continue learning. The combination of consistent purpose and talent is a winning one. [...] Talent is forged by learning and unlearning. [...] Talent attracts talent and mediocrity attracts mediocrity. (Marcet, 2019)

Throughout its history, our Institution has attracted many talented individuals. Marcellin, like other great founders, had that powerful ability to help his followers grow their talent and become leaders.

7. Have a MULTIPLIER EFFECT

It is our work to multiply the wells from which to draw the water that will forever quench the thirst of the many who ask, as did the Samaritan woman, “Sir, give me this water so that I may never thirst again” (John 4:15). It is our task to aim for a multiplier effect by training and inspiring people who, in turn, will guide, encourage and motivate other people and teams.

8. Enhance the capacity to ADAPT TO CHANGE

“A relentlessly changing world forces us not only to adapt and be flexible, but also to confront fundamental questions about our identity” (Lowney, 2013, p. 29). And our change will only be possible if it is assumed individually. Personal commitment cannot be substituted because no one can learn and unlearn for you. (Marcet, 2018)

9. Promote MENTORING AND GUIDANCE

Marcellin's decision to share his life with the first two young men at La Valla in 1817 had a profound and lasting impact not only on the Brothers of his time, but also on the Marist leaders who followed him. Today, the whole process of our leaders' growth, of their relationship with themselves, with the world and with God should be guided. At the same time, they will be able to exercise their role as mentors for other leaders in training.

10. Focus on CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A large part of the content should be devoted to solving real problems and complex problem-solving through critical thinking and creativity.

11. Instead of giving answers, ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

The Socratic method demonstrates the educational and transforming power of questions. A fundamental skill for leaders is to be good questioners, to know how to ask essential questions well.

12. Encourage dialogue between CHARISMA, MISSION AND MANAGEMENT

Charisma, mission and management should be in constant dialogue with guidelines for the evaluation and development of new skills to facilitate the predominance of adherence to Jesus and his Gospel in our Institution. This will enable us to be prophets of a new world⁴. (Varona, 2009)

3. In What Format?

The training programmes should be aimed at the institutional, local, provincial, regional and national levels. Limiting ourselves to the local or provincial level only would mean foregoing the synergies that we as countries and regions have been creating in recent years.

We have very concrete success stories in the area of training in various parts of the world that make it clear that together we are capable of carrying out great projects and bringing about significant improvements and changes in our provinces, countries and regions. Below are just two examples of this:

a. Marist International Centre in Nairobi (MIC)

The Centre was founded in 1986 in Kenya to respond to the urgent need to provide solid training to our young Brothers in Africa. Over the years it has become a reference point for Marist life on this continent. Hundreds of Brothers have completed the four-year training programme offered to them and many now hold leadership and governance positions in their respective Provinces.

b. Spanish Marist Conference (CME)

The restructuring of the Marist Provinces with works in Spain led the Provinces of Compostela, Ibérica, L'Hermitage and Mediterránea to form a grouping called the Spanish Marist Conference (CME). The key objective of the CME was to address the common interests of the member Provinces: to strengthen the sense of cohesion in the Provinces, to facilitate collaboration with the Catholic Church in Spain, to foster interprovincial solidarity, and to promote coordination and mutual support in various areas.

It should be noted that the training sponsored by the CME has been hugely important for the Provinces. From 2005 to the present, almost 2,500 people have participated in interprovincial training courses of different types and duration, following the General Design for Marist Training drawn up jointly by the four Provinces with works in Spain. This has been an important boost for the personal growth of educators and the Brothers and for the implementation and putting into practice of educational and pastoral innovation projects in our works. In addition, many interprovincial working groups have been created and have prepared guidelines, materials for common use (such as the yearly slogan) and reflections on mission themes.

Since September 2020, with the creation of the Marist Region of Europe (MRE)⁵, joint training work has taken place in the new region.

4. Different Formats

The lockdown restrictions we have experienced over the past year due to COVID-19 have forced us to look for imaginative solutions in all our educational works which, from one day to the next, had to be cancelled in order to prevent the spread of infection. This was also the case with a multitude of training activities and other types of projects throughout the Marist geography, which had to be postponed or cancelled for obvious reasons.

The disparate development and implementation of technological resources in different countries across the world has meant that the digital divide, already highly pronounced in less developed regions, has increased in the less wealthy countries. It is unrealistic, therefore, to talk about the transition from face-to-face formats to online formats in education and training activities based on using technological resources, given that this transition has not been universally possible for all the works and projects in our Provinces.

Nevertheless, there is a general feeling that the use of digital media for council and team meetings, for occasional meetings between communities and groups in the Provinces, for the remote monitoring of projects and works, and for providing individual and group mentoring is here to stay. It is also possible that in the not too distant future the participation of individuals and groups in our regular activities will be online. Improving the communication networks in the various countries will allow an increasingly widespread use of digital media.

In our view, the success of so many training courses, especially those organised at provincial and interprovincial level, lies precisely in the fact that participants had the opportunity to share their life and mission with each other for a certain period of time. The use of online formats to further the training of our leaders should be complementary to intensive face-to-face training or used in emergency situations such as during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The following is a simple list of formal and informal formats and tools that we currently use, or could use, to further the training of our leaders and to facilitate an active learning life:

1. Microlearning: reading blogs, TED-type conferences, using a new tool, listening to podcasts, etc.
2. Reading and self-study
3. Reading book summaries
4. Preparing talks on various topics
5. Carrying out research work
6. Proposing and sharing good practices
7. Writing essays and books⁶
8. Educational talks at regular meetings (of communities, team leaders, directors, works coordinators, Marist fraternities, etc.)
9. Attendance at conferences on various themes
10. Educational workshops of varying duration
11. Participating in provincial thematic conferences

12. Participating in round tables, debates, dialogues, radio programmes, etc.
13. Visits, exchange and training visits (internships)
14. Long-term face-to-face training courses: self-organised at provincial, interprovincial or regional level
15. Face-to-face training courses: organised by other institutions or associations in the sector, with participation open to other institutions
16. Official studies at universities and specialisation centres
17. MOOCs, webinars, events and thematic conferences broadcast online
18. Following authors via their broadcasts on video platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.), blogs or journals
19. Listening to audiobooks, specific radio programmes, recordings, etc.
20. Training in your free time
21. Regular exchanges with other leaders in your area of work or mission
22. Guiding young people, new educators, other leaders
23. Participating in mentoring processes
24. Carrying out experiences⁷ in communities of practice and learning networks

The provincial human resources teams will be an important element in promoting programmes for identifying and mentoring leaders. Similarly, they play a key role in the implementation of e-learning platforms – such as those already employed in some administrative units – and in promoting the democratisation of the use of the different formats.

5. Lifelong

The fourth SDG of the 2030 Agenda, approved by the UN in 2015, states, in relation to achieving quality education as a basis for improving people's lives, the desire to “promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”⁸

Training is either continuous (“in all forms, at all times and in all places”, Cañigueral, 2020, p. 167) or it will be limited to specific periods in our lives, perhaps at times when we had a particular responsibility or

position, shutting down any possibility of continuing to grow and adapt to the demands that young people and today's world require of us.

There are many resources we can use to keep our knowledge and skills up to date, but we must all, Brothers and laypersons alike, aware that we are called to exercise leadership in our environment, help each other to create common spaces for initial and continuous training, that make both a common mission project and a growth in faith possible. We are a charismatic family, and teamwork enhances the potential of charisma. (Secretariat of Laity, 2017, p. 18)

Below are three elements we would like to highlight:

1. Supporting former leaders or those in charge of works, teams or projects

Some time ago, the Marist Province of Ibérica launched a project entitled *El líder más allá de la función* (The leader beyond the role). The project has a practical focus and sets out a strategy to ensure that leaders, at the end of a period of service, are duly supported in the process of integration into their new situation and that they can take on new forms of leadership.

We must pay special attention to this process so that all those in this situation feel welcome within the educational work and the Institution itself, which is grateful for their dedication and generosity. It is also important to take advantage of their human capital, their accumulated knowledge and their commitment to Marist life, aspects that can enrich the team of educators. After a period of leadership in a responsible role, these leaders may feel called to play an important part in the work they are carrying out, in the heart of the Marist Christian community of reference or

in the provincial structure, where they can continue to exercise a positive and committed leadership. (Council of Marist Educational Works, Ibérica Province, 2017, p. 20)

2. A culture of learning

When people learn, so do our institutions. When people grow, institutions grow. Establishing a culture of continuous learning will give us the opportunity to learn and grow together.

The Spanish initiative Culturaprendizaje, which emerged during these times of pandemic, proposes adherence to a manifesto for a culture of learning, understanding this as a strategic axis for intelligent organisations.

In this situation of much uncertainty, many organisations which used to compete are investing resources in collaboration, innovating in more liquid organisational models. Many people are showing unprecedented levels of commitment and attitude. But this is not enough. Society as a whole, and organisations in particular, are compelled to incorporate learning as a core part of their strategy, values and work processes, understanding that learning is part of them, not only to overcome the present situation but also to anticipate future challenges. [...] We are all responsible for making our organisations smarter after this crisis. We have seen, for example, that in a short time, some people and organisations have been able to work from home and we have overcome some of the obstacles associated with digital transformation. It is therefore our responsibility to keep this legacy alive. An organisation or society that does not learn is doomed to disappear. Those in leadership roles, those responsible for managing the assets of their organisation, have a key role to play in order to ensure their ability to learn and transform. (Culturaprendizaje, 2020)

And it reminds us that today, more than ever before, we must learn from what has happened – highlighting the collective intelligence of organisations – to create, through learning and knowledge, a new reality.

3. Language learning

Knowing another language allows us not only to communicate but also to understand how other people think and how their cultures are structured.

The XXII General Chapter (2017) proposed to the whole Marist world the challenge of journeying together as a Global Charismatic Family. We have all at one time or another been in situations where people from the same family – our family – have not been able to share anything because of the difficulty of expressing themselves in another language.

Our family is distributed across more than 80 countries in the world, and we are responsible for making communication easier between all of us. The difficulty of mastering a language often makes us shy away from the challenge of studying and practising it. Knowing how to express ourselves with the basics in at least one of the official languages of the Institute (French, English, Portuguese and Spanish) in addition to our own language, would undoubtedly facilitate interprovincial and interregional relations. Even if speaking the other language is difficult, we should at least try to understand it. This knowledge would allow encounters in which everyone could express themselves in their own language and be understood by others.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does training actively help the development of Marist leadership in your reality?
2. How can we develop shared and distributed leadership in our Institutions and Congregation?
3. Do you have any experience of guidance or mentoring?
4. Of the training formats proposed in this chapter, which ones would you like to explore individually or with others?
5. What do you think are the advantages of face-to-face training over online training?
6. How can we develop a culture of lifelong learning in our local realities and communities?
7. How can we promote support processes at all stages of mission work (initiation, maturation, transitions, conclusion)?

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Notes

- 1 Marist Educational Mission, No. 15: *In as far as possible, and in accordance with the legal requirements of the day, Marcellin offered his followers initial and continuous human and spiritual training, focusing in particular on their intellectual and pedagogical development. The Hermitage, therefore, can be described as a crucible of Marist educational principles and practice.*
- 2 Marist Brothers. (1853). (XVIII Chapter) *Formación que debe dar el Hermano director a los Maestros noveles: En los comienzos.- Alientos.- Paciencia.- Lecciones prácticas.- Advertencias particulares.* In *Guía del Maestro*. Institute of Marist Brothers.
- 3 Culturaprendizaje (2020). *Towards a New Culture of Learning*. <http://www.culturaprendizaje.org>
- 4 Varona, M. G. (2009). Calls for the spiritual training of a leader, Annex 2, p. 99. Prophecy is that gift of God which enables believers and institutions to align themselves with God's will and to adapt their criteria, organisation and functioning to what is interpreted as an expression of God's will.
- 5 Marist Region of Europe (MRE). Further information at <https://champagnat.eu/>
- 6 Albert Cañigueral (2020) states: *"I write not because I know a lot, but because it is the best way to continue learning."* (p. 10). So, writing essays and books is another way to keep learning.
- 7 Further information: <https://www.chausa.org/publications/health-progress/article/september-october-2011/servant-leadership-the-way-forward->
- 8 Further information: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

CHAPTER 22



Br. Evilazio Francisco
Borges Teixeira
Rector of the Pontifical Catholic
University of Rio Grande do Sul



Br. Manuir José
Mentges
Vice-Rector of the Pontifical
Catholic University of Rio
Grande do Sul

Marist Higher Education as a Service

1. Introduction

In Act IV, scene I, of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2002), the words are spoken by the imprisoned Prospero. Miranda, his daughter, and Ferdinand, son of the King of Naples, are talking to him. He reminds us that we are made of the same material that is used to weave our dreams, "we are such stuff / As dreams are made on". Our identity is defined more by what we plan than by what we achieve, more by our dreams than by our reality.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Christian Education and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the Congregation for Catholic Education is publishing an *Instrumentum Laboris: Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (the Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014). The introduction to this text highlights the fact that we are living in times of a widespread "educational emergency" and invites us to seek individual maturity to help build the common good. *Gravissimum Educationis* suggests that universities should be serving society, not just the Church, and that universities should be outstanding not for their numbers but for their pursuit of knowledge (Vatican II, 1965, no. 10).

In similar fashion, the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* Apostolic Constitution (John Paul II, 1990) aims to draw attention to the fact that the Catholic university has the "privileged task" of "proclaiming the meaning of truth" whilst not neglecting research and teaching, like any other academic institution. A Catholic university should express its Christian inspiration, not just of its leaders but of the community as a whole. This thinking presupposes that the spiritual heritage of Catholic education is closely related to cultural heritage and scientific advance, and should provide a learning experience that includes research, thinking and life experience.

According to the working document *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014),

“Schools and universities are places where people learn how to live their lives, achieve cultural growth, receive vocational training and engage in the pursuit of the common good; they provide the occasion and opportunity to understand the present time and imagine the future of society and mankind.”

Underpinning Marist education is the motto, “Education is a work of love.” Those who love, care. Human beings are, by their very nature and essence, caring beings. They are made to care and need to be cared for. The same is true of love. All of us need to love and to be loved. Other founding principles of Marist education are, for example, the idea that education is based on principles of affection, a family environment and educating the whole person a comprehensive education. Marcelino Champagnat believed that every caring educator should do their best to mould the spirit of their students and make of education an act of service. No educator is educating adequately if they do not teach their students to want to serve others or, in other words, “the true service of education is education to service” (*Global Compact on Education*, 2020, p. 17).

When it comes to the day-to-day of our primary and higher education institutions, we must not forget that certain characteristics should be an integral part of our educational practice on all levels - the pedagogy of presence, more dialogue than authority, the pedagogy of simplicity, where the gifts of each are given in service, the pedagogy of work and consistency as a key contributor to good results and to abundant life.

Through service and creativity, we should be an example of hope, unity, responsibility, freedom, justice, critical awareness, self-reflection, reconciliation and peace both to our students and to the academic community, because such virtues contribute to the search for the meaning of life. This is a challenge we should all be seeking to fulfil in our daily lives or, in other words, in the ordinary day-to-day experience of university life. Values are something that should be seen in our lives and relationships more than spoken on our lips. According to the document, *Educating Today*

and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014), there are a number of quality hallmarks that Catholic schools and universities must be able to ensure: certain qualities that universities should be able to express:

- a. respect for individual dignity and uniqueness (hence the rejection of mass education and teaching, which make human beings easier to manipulate by reducing them to a number);
- b. a wealth of opportunities that are offered to young people for them to grow and develop their abilities and talents;
- c. a balanced focus on cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual aspects;
- d. encouragement for every pupil to develop their talents in a climate of cooperation and solidarity;
- e. the promotion of research as a rigorous commitment to truth, being aware that human knowledge has its limits, but also with a great openness of mind and heart;
- f. respect for ideas, openness to dialogue, the ability to interact and work together in a spirit of freedom and care.

2. The Challenge Facing Contemporary Universities

the first universities in the world, at least in the west, were “born from the heart of the Church”, as we see from the introduction to the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities (John Paul II, 1990). In the ninth century, universities were set up to train monks and later, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, cathedral schools were created as educational and teaching centres to which students were sent from all over Europe. The University of Bologna, in Italy, was the first to be created in the western world, in 1158. It was born of a merging of monastic and cathedral schools. The same happened in France, where La Sorbonne University was a product of the episcopal school of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Despite

its ancient origins and many reforms over the years, the university as an institution is still called to constant growth.

Universities grow old only when those who teach in them believe that what they are doing is perfect and that all they need to do is to reproduce the past. The biggest challenge universities face continues to be all-around education, developing well-rounded human beings, students who are prepared to be good citizens and have also gained professional qualifications. To achieve this, we need qualified teaching staff who are committed to the search for knowledge and understand it to be the best service they can render to humanity. With today's culturally diverse group of students, who are armed with an immense wealth of information and well-connected to the world through the social media, who do not simply accept the reproduction of the canons of the past, teachers must possess two key educational virtues: a positive restlessness that stimulates them to make every lesson better than the last and to educate and prepare their students in the best possible way; and the virtue of humility that recognises that a teacher cannot know everything, because nobody knows all there is to know.

Universities have always faced –and still face– the challenge of balancing science and rationality with the human factor. This balance is achieved by universities when they are able to practise self-reflection and self-criticism in all that they do, and when they are able to keep up with the demands of society without losing their values and principles. We are on the threshold of a new humanism, one principle of which is “to educate people to a new thought, that can reconcile unity and diversity, equality and freedom, identity and otherness.” (*Global Compact on Education*, 2020, p. 11).

Boaventura de Souza Santos (2005, pp. 8-9), in *The university in the twenty-first century*, talks of three crises facing universities. The first is that leadership of hegemony as a result of contradictions between the traditional functions of the university and those that came to be attributed to

it throughout the twentieth century. In other words, there was, on the one hand, the function of producing high culture, which began at its origins in the European Middle Ages and was necessary for the training of an elite society and, on the other hand, the production of average cultural values and instrumental knowledge, useful for training the qualified labour force capitalist logic demanded. The crisis of leadership hegemony has arisen from the fact that universities are no longer alone in the domain of higher education and the production of research.

The second crisis is that of legitimacy: in view of the contradiction between the rank of specialised knowledge, mainly through restricted access and demands for equal opportunity for the children of the working class, universities are no longer a consensual institution. Finally, a third crisis is the institutional crisis: the result of the contradiction between the demand for autonomy in the definition of the university's values and objectives and the growing pressure to hold it to the same criteria of efficiency, productivity and social responsibility faced by private enterprises. Boaventura de Souza Santos (2005, p. 17) believed that this has led to "the commercialisation of universities."

Universities are called to go beyond this technocratic and financial way of thinking. According to Susin (2004):

From this arises the clear tension that exists between the traditional humanist ideal and the reality of the market which overshadows and transforms all ideals into superficial idealism, an ineffective type of romanticism which deepens the tragedy of the impossibility of reconciling the purity of the ideal with the cruelty of the real (p. 81).

3. The Context of Uncertainty

the beginning of this century saw the return of the age-old idea that the complex problems facing humanity can be resolved by education

and, especially, by higher education institutions (Teixeira & Audy, 2006, p. 102). We are living in a transition period and, to some extent, according to Immanuel Wallerstein (2001), this period is also one of disturbance and uncertainties, requiring much creativity on our part if we are to build a good society.

Perhaps three images may help us understand the period in which we have found ourselves. The first image is one of light synthesised in the utopia of strong reasoning, evoking the inspired principle of modernity, dominating and explaining everything in the light of reason. Human beings as owners of their own fate. That is what makes ideologies violent. The idea of totality becomes totalitarianism. From light to twilight. The second could be the image of night, a time to abandon hope, a time of disenchantment. A time of sinking and breaking. Mental illness is the indifference towards living, which dehumanizes. A great deal of loneliness, others as moral strangers. A third image is that of the dawn, which could represent the reverse of disenchantment. Nostalgia for full justice; nostalgia for the other. Here we have the urgency of finding meaning beyond the drowning, as a horizon of the other. Rediscovery of the other in all their concreteness. In a discussion that is global, we cannot separate knowledge from ethics and the moralising dimension of any educational and political system.

An analogy present in an inspired text by José Tolentino de Mendonça (2016):

Cultural change and breaking away will occur. To find our way on our journeys, we will no longer use a compass but a radar. What does that mean? It means we are no longer going in a specific direction. True, a radar looks for its target, but that search now implies an indiscriminate opening, plural, mobile. The compass clearly pointed to north, and only one direction, whereas the radar makes the search more powerful and more complex. The signposts have multiplied and so have the paths (p. 126).

Today's university is living in a context of complexity and uncertainty that requires new interfaces with society. It does not only train competent professionals for the job market, but also seeks to provide authentic human, personal, social and professional excellence. The relevance of universities should be assessed in terms of the gap between what society expects from institutions and what they actually do.

In its contribution to social questions about the modern world, the university must not lose contact with human reality and must avoid the extremes. One of these extremes may be the "temptation" to work only in an academic context, losing itself in the jungle of concepts and abstracts. Another "temptation" could be to fall into the trap of dealing with the problems of the moment and thus lose sight of a whole historical process and of the relationship between social and ethical order and spiritual values.

Universities are being "asked" to interact more with society. They should not be enclosed inside their walls. They need to be in constant dialogue with businesses, governments and society. An innovative and modern university should be involved in its country's development.

Higher education needs to reinforce its interactions with society and, according to the *Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990), its research activities should include a study of serious contemporary problems such as poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, deterioration of the environment and sickness, problems that affect the dignity of human life and which require a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community.

What do we understand by community? According to Peter Block (2008), community has to do with a sense of belonging, with being an owner, something I own. In everything, what we do is bring in our deepest desire. It has to do with experiencing the feeling of safety we have in a place where we are emotionally, spiritually and psychologically whole, and where we belong. We are invited to become what we hope the future

will be. The university community is a “learning” community, which improves itself by constant dialogue between educators amongst themselves and with their students.

In its own particular way, the university should be coming from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective and seeking to create a new non-violent and non-oppressive society made up of highly motivated and whole individuals who are inspired by love for humanity and guided by the search for wisdom.

So, universities should be dedicated to training highly qualified professionals who are committed to citizenship and take joint responsibility for the fate of human beings, especially the poor and ostracised in society. Defending and promoting human rights leads us to take decisive and courageous action in building a common home. It is up to each of us, and the university, as a higher education institute, to create and strengthen communities, training people who are committed to building a society that is more and more effective because it respects life and all that is human.

In the *humanist* search, the centrality of people and their training is non-negotiable as a central vector in development and innovation. University must allow itself to navigate the frontiers of knowledge and be a space where fundamental questions about matters that affect people and community are more and more welcomed, with community being understood as both local and global. Being Catholic, the university is also called to take on its identity, to express its Christian inspiration, not just of its leaders but of the community as a whole, demanding institutional performance in service of society (Teixeira & Audy, 2006, p. 109). As far as service is concerned, the *Instrumentum Laboris* on the *Global Compact on Education* (2014, p. 5) states that, “we have been created not only to live ‘with others’, but also to live ‘at the service of others’, in a salvific and enriching reciprocity.”

Universities should also be open to self-transcendence, as defined in its broadest sense by Victor Frankl and referred to by Elizabeth Lucas

(1990, pp. 35–36): university as a basic anthropological facet of the human condition, implying a constant going out of oneself and directing oneself beyond oneself, in relation to something or someone, in relation to a meaning. A meaning, therefore, must be discovered in the world. According to Frankl (2001), human beings are always moving towards something, or someone different to themselves, i.e. the more a person forgets themselves, dedicating themselves to serving a cause or loving another person, the more human they will be and the more fulfilled they will be (Frankl, 2001, p. 100). But this self-fulfilment is only possible when it involves self-transcendence. In other words, human beings become themselves when they stop looking at themselves and forget about themselves. According to the working document, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, no. 2), teachers should direct young people to knowledge and its applications. Research should not be separated from the ethical and transcending dimensions of human beings. True science, therefore, is part of a three-way system –science, ethics and transcendence–, and the elements involved complement each other and contribute to a deeper understanding of human beings and the world.

4. University Provides a Service That Goes Beyond the Mercantilist Logic

Catholic universities understand their mission. They have clear aims, and these are expressed in their documents. They serve humanity and the Church in the cause of truth. This is the Christian perspective on sustainable and integral human development (Marist International Network of Higher Education Institutions, 2010, p. 4), and it is very different to a perspective that is reduced to the level of efficiency, production and profitability at any price. The big challenge, however, is in making this referential framework operational. Universities struggle with the question asked of them: training for life or for the market? According to Neutzling (2001), this is certainly one of the main challenges facing our universities, which desire both to provide academic excellence and to be Christian and

Catholic. In the same way, Luiz Carlos Susin (2004, p. 84) believes that the current logic of the market is reductive, competitive, exclusive, contrary to humanistic thinking about the origins of the universe, which intends to be humanely holistic, united and inclusive. This apparent latent ambiguity is disturbing for academics.

According to Cleide Rita Silvério de Almeida (2001, p. 215), there are two types of university: the coat of arms and the logo. The coat of arms represents the historical or traditional university, offering a complex learning experience that encompasses wisdom, meaning, knowledge, aura and tradition. The logo represents new universities, institutions that absorb the demand for the formation of a labour market, paying lip-service to knowledge and wisdom. They act in a professional arena that does not address the universal but rather the specific.

The role of universities is to contribute to the advancement of society. The truth is that universities, although they have to be efficiently managed and have clear indicators of results, in all senses of the word, cannot be managed like companies. Universities rather are additionally charged with encouraging interests that do not translate into financial results. What will the world be like in a few decades, when the last of those who know Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and the ancient languages of Latin America and the rest of the world has left us? When we no longer know about the past and we have wiped out all that came before, deeming it to be “useless”. We will live without a collective memory, and that poses a catastrophic threat to democracy and freedom. Universities are not made to sell diplomas, but to offer students a culture that can set them free. We need to educate young people to resist corruption.

Nuccio Ordine in his global best-seller, *The utility of the useless* (2016), urges us to rediscover the human within each of us, and strongly criticises today's status quo: the obsession with power and the unrestrained chasing after profit. Where are universities in this context? Universities must be highly flexible as they seek to confront the problems of uncer-

tainty created by this ever more demanding society, in which the speed of change demands that higher education institutions adapt on an almost daily basis and leave behind academia to concentrate on skills. Over the past few years, for example, digital skills have become a recurring theme, with talk of lifelong learning or the so-called “information society”.

However, Boaventura de Souza Santos (2005, p. 76) draws our attention to the fact that alongside the contemporary “technology euphoria”, we are also experiencing a certain epistemological uncertainty, a fruit of the perverse consequences of certain scientific developments and the fact that contemporary science is incapable of fulfilling its promises to society. University, in seeing “scientific” knowledge as the only valid form of knowledge, contributes to the marginalisation of social groups who have only “non-scientific” forms of knowledge at their disposal.

In 1999, the Bologna Declaration, which brought together educational ministers from various countries, introduced into the educational arena concepts such as skills and abilities. Unfortunately, this language was confused with the construction of a higher education that was mainly involved in producing qualified labour for the market. From that moment on, higher education began to expand in a way that was disconnected from the ancient tradition of university as the *anima mater* or *soul mother*, which helped people develop and showed them that they did not require only technical development but also a whole new ethos. A tension has been created between the mission of universities and the needs of the market. These are not incompatible aspirations, but they cannot be reduced to the mere superficial, the mere product, the tyranny of rankings, even though these are important.

Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014) really sheds light on this subject when it talks about a multiplicity of skills that are not reduced to the mere transmission of knowledge but are part of a humanistic vision that encompasses creativity, imagination, ability to take responsibility, love of the world, the

cultivation of justice and compassion. University should not only place value on skills related to knowing and doing, but also on teaching people to live alongside others and to grow in humanity.

5. Some final considerations

In *his Laws*, Plato states that, “man ... of all animals he becomes the most divine” if he is given “proper instruction” (Plato, 1980, p. 766a). More than knowledge and information, the ultimate purpose of education is the transformation of human beings.

The book *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man and Life's Greatest Lesson*, by Mitch Albom (1998), describes one of the last days of Professor Morris Schwartz and holds some important lessons for teachers. He states a very real truth when observing some of his students, that many people wander around in lives that have no meaning. They seem to be half-asleep, even when they are doing things they deem to be important. That's because they are running after the wrong things. (Albom, 1998, p. 42). And he adds that it is “all part of the same problem ... we value the wrong things, and that leads to a life of disillusion”. (Albom, 1998, p. 101). He despairs about the fact that no matter where we live, the main problem with human beings is our intellectual short-sightedness. We can't see our own potential. We need to recognise our potential and work hard to achieve the best version of ourselves. (Albom, 1998, p. 126).

How do we overcome the inertia of institutions and educators? How do we teach teachers to teach better? Should learning be student-centred? Should teacher planning be multidisciplinary? How do we strike a balance between tasks and projects? We often say that our universities are places where lessons from the 19th century are taught by teachers from the 20th century to students from the 21st century. Any improvements we make are somewhat disorganised. We are good at assessing and analysing, but we are not good at problem-solving. That is because we get caught up

in the details. We need to ensure that our vision of the ideal human being does not stop us from seeing the real human being in front of us.

Education in and of itself cannot solve the problem of development. An inclusive, holistic, humanist education can improve the human condition within a peaceful and tolerant co-living space.

It is important to talk and to listen, attempting to make real connections. But as Byung-Chul Han warns us, (2018, p. 69), we are also living in a time where society is tired, where we are engaging our brains less and less, where we are performing without really performing, where we are being asked to constantly Throw in the towel and experience every form of excess. Excess can kill the soul. I am sure we are all in agreement that this is happening not just on a personal level, but also on a professional level, and the whole scenario is one of much uncertainty.

Education is changing rapidly, particularly in universities. If that is true of universities as a whole, it is even more true of religious educational institutions, which have a more complex approach. These institutions are suffering perhaps more than others. Their philosophical and educational foundations are being discredited in many ways, particularly by their target public, the students, but also by their academic and professional staff. When we talk about religious universities, we think straight away of the figure of the educator. In this type of institution, the educator is not just the teacher, but rather all those who are involved in its mission because they are all educating in some way.

We must redefine anthropology. If ethics, politics and economics are to be the answer to human life, we need to build on a foundation that encompasses bioethics, biopolitics and bioeconomy within a perspective of social responsibility. We need to reconstruct human life. Education is a non-negotiable human right. We need to recover the sense that human beings are in charge of their own destiny. We need to think sustainably, spiritually. We are part of a whole, rather than the beginning or the end.

We should constantly work in favour of the whole and seek to transcend our own selves.

Bearing in mind the human condition, how do we approach social responsibility in universities? Empathy for others, for problems, for pain, for vulnerability. A humane space in which others live alongside us, a re-discovery of proximity and the experience of pain in the soul when others are hurting. Instead of talking about exclusion, recognising the excluded, instead of talking about injustice, identifying those against whom injustice has been done. Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge (2015) suggest that we focus on our inner world and seek to connect with our deepest goals and aspirations. They discuss how we can improve self-awareness, empathy and social skills to benefit our own personal and academic development. As human beings, we should be seeking to understand ourselves, those around us and the society to which we belong in the broadest sense. We should embrace empathy as a value and a virtue.

Education should be inclusive and of high quality, and higher education should be one of the mechanisms that ensures sustainable development. It should be a tool in our hands that helps us face the modern world and creates citizens who are capable of building a fair, open and united society. Higher education should be a fundamental human right. It should be something sustainable, something that reaches beyond our consumerist, greedy industrial society. Higher education is directly linked to a better quality of life.

Universities should promote a global and holistic vision because they are a place where many forms of knowledge somehow come together to form a whole. Universities should promote the environment, not only by their research, but also by the way they shape new habits and attitudes and new ways of relating to nature. These new ways are vitally important if we are to ensure the future of the next generations.

Human beings are only fulfilled when they are serving other human beings, when they are innovative and efficient and promoters of

change, when they combine good leadership with good strategic planning and appropriate financial support. We should be seeking quality in all that we do. Doing things well the first time and all the other times is linked to trust, to leaders who are available to help us build, use and change our world. “Changing the world first means waking up to our own potential, understanding ourselves and our interests... and being the best version of ourselves”. (Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul [Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul], 2018, p. 44).

What will the university of the future look like? There will be many changes. Our mission is to help our young people meet this challenging world with a humanistic vision, with service. Will education be self-taught and digital? In our role as social players, we are able to improve reality, to make social responsibility a key element in training professionals of the future.

The writer, poet and Cardinal, José Tolentino de Mendonça, in *A Mística do Instante* (2016, p. 26), points out that this means first finding a new hermeneutic, risking a new structure, making a proposal, which begins with believing, but also with a new way of living. He also points out that we are not just lacking those who can teach us about the inner life, but those who can teach us about life itself and offer us a dignified experience of life.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What links and connections can be made between basic and higher Marista education?
2. What contribution can Marista higher education institutions make to the training of leaders (brothers, managers and laypeople) on the various mission fronts of the institute?
3. We have a considerable number of Marista higher education institutions spread across different geographical regions. Where could joint projects be developed?
4. What is the main role of the Marista higher education institutions in

the context and environment of the Marista Institute at the beginning of the 21st century?

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