
Leading with an alert and purposeful awareness

“Servant leadership is a model inspired by Jesus-servant, Jesus-brother. It has an emphasis on horizontal, collaborative and participatory community.

It evokes many characteristics of Fr Champagnat.

We are invited to understand it and to make it part of our daily practice, helping others to be servants of other people and to announce good news that offers life in its fullness”

(Br. Luis Carlos Gutiérrez on behalf of the International Mission Commission, 2021).

Idalia Ramos

national coordinator of education
El Salvador – América Central



Dear Marist of Champagnat, greetings from El Salvador, Central America. I am Idalia Ramos and I am responsible for the coordination of education in my country. I work with eight Marist educational centres that bring Champagnat’s dream to life through education and evangelisation. I look after the educational administration of each institution, which is related to the particular style of the school: induction of personnel, formation, development of educational projects, curriculum development, accompaniment of school-leaders, teachers and school counsellors and follow-up of the institutional educational projects. My country belongs to the Marist Province of Central America, Puerto Rico and Cuba. I have been working in the Marist world for about 20 years and I am very happy, feeling enriched by each experience and lesson learned from and shared during all these years.

In these lines I want to share with you my reflections on one of the characteristics of prophetic- and servant- leadership: awareness. To do so, I will focus my contributions on three main ideas based on personal experiences and on previous reading, specifically Chapter 6 of the book “MaristVoices” published by the General House. I want you too to reflect on how this characteristic affects your leadership and your mission.

First of all, it is necessary for the Marist leader to know himself/herself. Becoming aware of our strengths and limitations helps us to exercise our leadership more effectively. In this sense, it is necessary to be aware of our emotions and reactions to certain situations. Taking seriously the way we react to an event will help us forestall a problem, an upset or a pre-emptive and erroneous decision. It is important to know how to handle the uncomfortable moments that arise in everyday life.

In my experience, on stressful occasions the best thing to do is to keep quiet and wait. Never make decisions on the spur of the moment. This is not always easy. With our human nature we are reactive to events that arise and we find it difficult to delay dealing with the situation to a later stage. I believe that, to deepen self-knowledge, every leader should follow a process of personal training in this area, plumbing the depths of emotions, behaviour and reactions to different situations that may arise in our mission.

Secondly, we need to become aware of God's presence in our leadership. For this, we need a close relationship with Him, a relationship which invites us to contemplate His action in the world. In our daily activities we run the risk of getting lost among so many responsibilities, administrative formalities and actions which, although they are part of the mission entrusted to us, can distance us from the presence of God.

I believe that one way to experience this awareness of God's presence in us and in the world is to cultivate silence. It is necessary for the leader to find spaces for silence, meditation, contemplation of God. In our hectic lives with many commitments and chores, it is always very opportune to get away from the hustle and bustle and take a few personal minutes for this contact with God, to allow ourselves to be amazed by him and to discover him in the small details, in everyday life. By being aware of God's action in our lives and realities we will be more aware that our leadership, rather than a position of power and privilege, is a path of service and proclamation of the Kingdom.

Thirdly, the Marist servant-leader needs to be aware of the people he or she accompanies and the context in which he or she exercises leadership. We cannot repeat models of other leaders or rely on already established structures without responding to the people we are addressing and the contexts in which we exercise our leadership. To do this, we need to know the people we are accompanying, their characteristics, their culture, their way of understanding life. It means being attentive to what is happening around us, being fully involved in daily relationships and attending to the needs that arise. It means consciously listening to the question "Where is your brother" (Gen. 4,9).

This can help us make decisions related to the well-being and care of people, to their personal and professional growth. Being attentive to their situation, interests and needs makes them feel valued, more identified with the work to which they belong and more committed to the mission.

From my experience, I can affirm the importance of contact with people, the dai-





ly greeting, taking the time to ask about their families, their students, their health, their concerns and aspirations. People feel valued when you take an interest in their personal and professional lives. I have seen that when you take an interest in people, when you listen to them and take their suggestions into account, they feel more committed to the mission.

One way of doing this can be through small gestures and details: congratulating employees on their achievements, greeting them on their birthdays, asking for their opinions before making decisions, including their proposals, publicly acknowledging their successes and encouraging them to continue to achieve their goals.

To conclude, I would like you too to reflect on the level of awareness in these three areas in your leadership and mission. How well do you know yourself? When was the last time you received personal growth training? In what places and people do you discover the presence of God? How much do you cultivate personal silence? Do you know all your collaborators closely? When was the last time you spent time with them and asked them about their family, their achievements and concerns?

Idalia Ramos



The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marist Institute.

If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to fms.cimm@fms.it

