

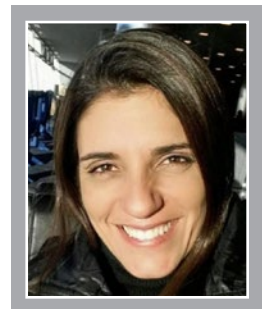
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## Servant leadership: the person at the center

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Reductionist decisions are made without perspective or audacity

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I'm known as Lica Marques. I am the Corporate Education Manager at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), which belongs to the Rede Marista. My mission is to work with public and private companies, understanding the need for training for their Teams in the process of developing Corporate Education projects.



Inspired by chapter 11 of the book *MaristVoices*, **Leadership, a priority commitment to people: growing together, accompanying each other, empowering each other**, written by Brothers Gabriel Villa-Real and Pere Ferré, I would like to share a special moment in my journey as a leader, which was the implementation of the Marist Institute's Leadership Training Program in 2022, which targeted leaders from different countries, with exclusive content that was developed according to the principles, expectations and needs of the Institute.

When Brother Manuir explained to me the demand and the great responsibility we would be taking on by agreeing to carry out the project. At first, I didn't hesitate to say that we would do it with every expectation that it would turn out to be a success. I felt some discomfort, which is normal for someone who is aware of the huge responsibility they are taking on, but it quickly passed. It came and went mainly because I knew that I would be relying on a huge group of people who were highly qualified to deal with projects like these.

From a pedagogical perspective, we sought to select a coordinator who could carry out our pedagogical proposal, which was already very well designed by the Marist Institute, and which would involve the themes listed as necessary to be worked on with the leaders, in addition to the content presented in the *MaristVoices* Book. We chose Professor Dr. Ana Clarissa Zanardo to lead this process. What a great choice. A professor who readily understood the expectations of the Marist Institute and, together with the teaching staff chosen to work on the project, organized, one by one, the deliveries related to content that could be part of the learning process for Marist leaders.

The administrative perspective was coordinated by me, with the support of more than 20 people, representing more than 5 areas of the University, including Continuing Education, the International Office, the Events Centre, the Rectorate, the Purchasing Sector, University Pastoral Center, the Operational Services Sector, among others, as well as external partners, so that we could, in the time proposed, organize the translation of content, the recording of video lessons, reception, accommodation, food, logistics, physical space and other aspects related to all the necessary structure so that the course, both online and face-to-face, would be a success.

For the Marist Leadership Program to come to fruition, there were many meetings, many exchanges. I remember that everything was planned and decided as a team. Something I value a lot in leadership is dialogue, co-creation and the empowerment of the Team. I'm happy when a team member makes a suggestion and it is put into practice, or after several analyses and planned structures, a team member points out a possible error, a possible risk that had not been considered. This feeling of belonging, and the environment of psychological security created by situations such as an idea being put into practice, generates engagement, generates commitment. And there was a lot of listening and ideas put into practice! According to the brothers Gabriel and Pere, empowerment is a key element and strengthens a person's capabilities. The consistency of the leader and the trust received contributes to support the mission, especially in complex situations, unknown problems, tense moments, risky circumstances, and emergencies. Trust is reciprocal. Without it, relationships deteriorate.

When you work with multidisciplinary teams, leading projects where many of the members are not your direct leaders, some are even your leaders on other occasions, but need to accept you as their leader on specific projects, it is a great opportunity to exercise leadership that is not



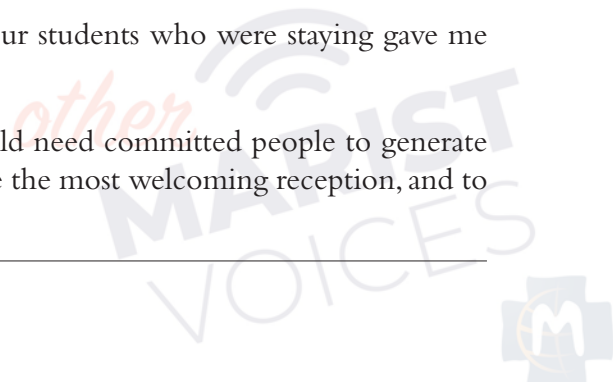


imposed by a position, by a hierarchy, but by a specific piece of work that has a beginning, middle and end and needs to be orchestrated and controlled in a respectful, careful way, taking into account the individuality of each team member.

I remember a specific situation during the students' stay in Porto Alegre, when we were receiving complaints about the service provided by the hotel, which was a contracted supplier. I promptly went to the hotel in person--I did not phone, I did not email--I went in person to talk and listen to the person responsible for the service. This person gave me her point of view, mentioned her challenges, and I listened--listened and observed the environment around me. After listening and observing, I told her how I expected the service to be for guests who were experiencing a moment with PUCRS, and that this was a hotel chosen by PUCRS, and I offered to help. I talked a lot about how we are at PUCRS in terms of hospitality, about care, about the important mission it had at that moment, in that hotel, with those people who had come from different countries and had been away from home for days. At no point did I change my tone of voice, I wasn't harsh, on the contrary, I welcomed her and offered to help, and concluded by presenting her a book entitled "The Disney Way of Delighting Customers", a simple book, but one that conveys the importance of hospitality in simple language. She appeared desirous to grow in that line of work. I remember it as if it were yesterday--her expression of gratitude and the affectionate hug I received.

Afterwards, the positive feedback received from our students who were staying gave me a sense of fulfilment.

For the course to be a success, I knew that I would need committed people to generate the best content, to organize the safest logistics, to provide the most welcoming reception, and to



be ready, especially during the face-to-face stage, to resolve any unforeseen circumstances, which I was sure we would have. Regardless of what might be happening behind the scenes, our students would not be impacted but instead would have the best possible experience which would lead to success. As the brothers Gabriel and Pere point out: Decision-Making requires vision. When management doesn't have this vision, there are formal answers, empty justifications, an increase in bureaucracy, the creation of control bodies and the reassertion of power. Fears paralyze and block. Reductionist decisions are made without perspective or audacity. In this job I needed people who could make decisions in situations that were within their reach.

I needed a bold team that could decide what was best for the group without my presence. We did it! We ended the course with 62 leaders from 19 countries, representing various mission fronts of our Marist Institute, and we hope to meet them again very soon on our mission fronts!



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](mailto:fms.cimm@fms.it)