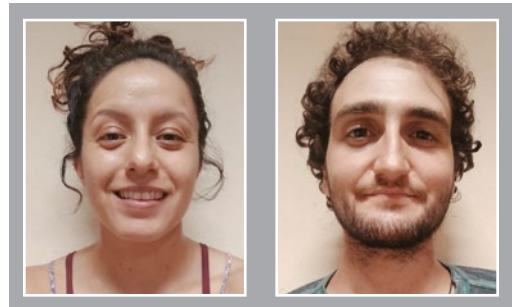

Listening: the basic verb of leadership

Leadership and horizontal listening

“Showing a contemplative attitude in our leadership make us alert to what is happening within ourselves and in the world around us”.

(Br. Norbert Mwila)

Pablo and Laura
Missionary couple.
América Central, Province of Cuba



We are Pablo (Spanish, 29 years old) and Laura (Bolivian, 33 years old), a missionary couple, and members of the Montagne LaValla200 community in Holguín, Cuba. Our Provinces of origin are Mediterránea and Santa María de los Andes. We are currently integrated in the Province of Central America, in which the Marist presences in Cuba are located. Our LaValla200 community is made up of Brothers Pepe (Ibérica) and Luis (Santa María de los Andes), and ourselves. Our role in this reality is centered on personal, spiritual, community and socio-educational accompaniment of different urban and rural communities in Holguín (La Colorada) and Cacocum (Cristino Naranjo-Las Juanitas and Limpio Chiquito).

Reflecting and discussing leadership through service in our time, is one of the challenges we find in the world of the Church, social action, mission...it is the vertical paradigm of “serving others”, guided by the intuitions we have of “what we think others need”, instead of being guided by the conclusions drawn from observation. , listening and dialogue with the people and realities themselves (horizontal paradigm). Although it is done with all good intentions, and sometimes the intuitions may be on the right track, the truth is that this way of serving and leading can generate two major difficulties. Firstly, that we do not get the real needs right and that the potential help we could give is not entirely effective; and secondly, that we generate a relationship of dependence on others, and not one of community building and transformation, by not involving people in the process of addressing and/or solving the problem.

As Marists, dedicated to education and social transformation, part of our work has been to guide what we believe to be positive for the present and future life of children and young people, hoping that they will listen to us, and to challenge them with our ideas, convictions, knowledge...

More and more we discover along the way that, in the same way, to be good servant leaders, we have to be in continuous “learning” and therefore in a continuous “listening”.

In tune with this idea of Marcellin's: We cannot see a child or a young person without feeling a deep desire to tell them how beautiful it is to live and the great love that God has for them, we also discover that, in order to have a better relationship with this call, of service and of care for the realities of need and vulnerability, a horizontal, fraternal, community relationship is necessary. I cannot share this love that God has for the little ones if I do not live this love with my brothers and sisters in the community, in the work team, in the Church, in synodality... if I do not listen with love to what the other has to say, to what hurts them, to what makes them ebb and flow, their silences, their history...

From the Spiritual Testament, we remember, making our own the words of Marcellin: May it be said of us, look how the Marists love one another! We need to live a transforming community leadership, based on service, fruit of listening and open to the Spirit, to the signs of our times, making available “our loaves and fishes”, with the “loaves and fishes of others”, making ourselves “one” on the way.

As psychologists, we see day by day how inner ailments begin to heal with the relief that comes when we feel that someone recognizes our value, treats us with dignity, wants to understand us, listens to us with more than just our ears... with our heart.

As we reflect on what listening means in leadership, we discover that it is precisely “listening” that is the first step towards leadership and animation. There can be no authentic servant leadership without listening. And it must be a listening in gerund, always in movement, constant, active, welcoming... “listening” at every step...

Listening to oneself, to one's history, to one's background, to the inner voices that make us see who we are, that give us courage and drive us to dare to be and to act.

Listening to others, to their stories, the voices, their cries, their silences, their laments, their desires and dreams that each place and its people have; listening contemplatively without judging,





from the tenderness and mercy of the Father-Mother relationship.

Listening to the movements of the Spirit, of the Ruaj; looking with gratitude to the past, with passion to the present and with confidence to the dawning of new horizons, new dances, new voices....

Today there is a great need to listen to each other, to allow others to listen to each other, and to listen to them. Today we need to be **Marist mystical leaders-animators and prophets** from the perspective of CONTEMPLATIVE, WELCOMING AND TRANSFORMING LISTENING, living this attitude in a personal and communitarian way.

We must listen to the whispers of the mission, the stories that can inspire us to walk, encourage and lead. Listening shares life. The motto of the year of vocations invited us to care for and generate life. By listening, we can do this. By listening, we find the grace to discover new horizons beyond our borders. Listening eliminates loneliness. By listening, we discover ourselves as companions of the Ruach. By listening we dare to make the decision to walk together side by side towards the fashioning of a more loving world.

Song- Marist, listening to life. Author
Pablo Cobo Peinado and Laura Miño Pérez.

*Listen to the three violets
that beat in your heart,
They have the whisper of mission.*



*Tell me the story of the rock that opened,
Who, in the face of the impossible, never gave up.*

**MARIST LISTENING, SITTING AT THE TABLE SHARING LIFE.
MARIST LISTENING TO LIFE,
NURTURING SEEDS THAT GENERATE NEW DAYS.**

*Towards new horizons, in fraternity,
Accomplices of the spirit, beyond frontiers.
On this road, there is no solitude,
those of yesterday and those of today, together with those to come.*

**MARIST LISTENING, SITTING AT THE TABLE,
SHARING LIFE.
MARIST LISTENING TO LIFE,
NURTURING SEEDS THAT GENERATE NEW DAYS.**



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