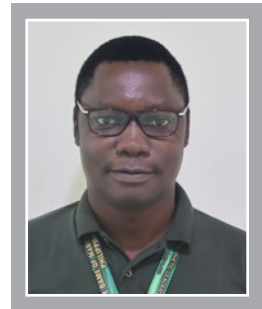

A learning servant leadership

“Leadership also differs from management.
Managers do things right; leaders do the right things.”
(Marist Voices, cap. 3 - Br. Seán Sammon)

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Currently, I am the headmaster of one of the schools in Tanzania where the brothers started the mission in 1992. The school is diocesan managed by the Marist Brothers. I have been the headmaster for 9 years now.

I am grateful and honored to share my little experience and what I understand about servant Leadership. Servant Leadership according to Robert Greenleaf (1973) and which I agree with him is to be a servant first. “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve others instead of wanting power, influence or wealth (Greenleaf, 1973). This leadership style requires the leader to demonstrate listening, empathy, stewardship and commitment to the personal growth of the group that he or she leads. It seeks to move management and personal interaction away from controlling activities and towards a more synergistic relationship. Above all servant leadership looks first at how leadership or the services the leader renders benefits others” (Greenleaf, 1973)

This style of leadership is very important as leader in our daily lives, we are first inspired by Jesus, who was a perfect servant leader, and by our founder, who left the comfort of the parish, and decided to live with the first brothers in La Valla

When we are in leadership sometimes, we forget the purpose and objectives why we leaders are. We become bossy and forget that we are there to serve people. Our influence in leadership should be seen on how we serve and take care of the people we lead and were entrusted to us. We forget that we are there to empower the people we lead and make a difference in their lives.

Jesus was misunderstood by his style of leadership even by his own disciples. He decided to teach them which kind of a leader he was. Christ our leader spent his entire earthly life showing to us how he didn't come to be served but to serve. Mt 20:20, 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. Marist Voices chapter 7 pg 124. In our places of work, sometimes we are really misunderstood by our own employees or companions, just as Peter didn't understand our Lord. As they could easily say, no you can't do such a work or job because you are our boss, and we will do it for you. Such situations happen in our places of work and if we can't correct it, we can imagine which kind of leaders we will be creating in the future. However, as leaders we must champion this style of servant leadership because it helps us to earn respect from our employees or companions, they will feel valued, and the vision of our ministries is shared. When employees are valued and respected, they will be free to share whatever they have in our ministries because they have the vision of ministry at heart.

As Marists, the model of Jesus Christ as servant leader is the one, we try to emulate. We humble ourselves before others to serve a greater purpose and for the good of others (cfr. Mt 20:28).

Jesus was prepared to serve everyone, even the one who would ultimately betray him. By washing his disciples' feet, he didn't diminish but rather enhanced his position and influence as a leader. He said whoever wants to become great among you, must be servant first (cfr. Mk 10: 42-44, Mt 20:25-28). He was challenging his disciples being a leader is a call to serve others. Christ servant leaders are motivated by love and humility. Love is a driving force which is in us that helps us to put others needs before ours. As Br. Sean Sammon puts it, simple acts of kindness are the best way /means of eradicating violence and hatred (Marist Voices, p. 57).



With this kind of style of leadership, there several ideas that comes to mind:

- Love and
- Risk taking
- Leading by example
- Listening culture

When it comes to love it is very important as a leader to begin the day reflecting on the love the leader have for others. A leader that out of love serves others' needs before own.

Risk taking is another idea that comes to mind. We



have to take risks in leadership and when we make mistakes, we admit that we have made mistakes, learn from them and forge ahead.

Another idea is being an example of the people we lead. We have to live what we preach. Doing the opposite, we lose respect to the people we lead.

Servant leadership involves also putting the people we lead ahead of our agendas. The people we lead have always something to contribute to our mission or ministries. Working as a team and shared vision, the objective of our mission or ministries will be achieved.

To have the culture of listening. Listening to the people we lead or the people we collaborate with. This helps them to feel valued, listened to and their contribution valued to take the ministry to the next level.

Key reflections that come to mind when talking about servant leadership are as follows:

It's a style of leadership that people of some parts of the world are not used to. It's a style of leadership that entails as religious, to serve and not be served. From the teaching and examples of Jesus, we are called to render services and submit ourselves to the higher purpose which is beyond our personal interest.

We are called to love, serve others' needs before our own needs.

We are called to be servant leaders to our followers in words and deeds and as this will show them how they can be servant leaders for tomorrow.

We must admit that it is hard and that is why I think it should be a process of learning. The servant leader must be a learning servant who wants to grow both as a leader and a servant for the good of others.

Talking of my experience in school as a leader, I believe that the best method for me as a servant leader is to model the way for teachers by demonstrating love and humility, honor and respect in the way I interact with the teachers, students and parents and any other visitor who comes to school. I try to put my ability to lead as based on my ability to follow Christ, Christ who was a perfect servant leader. Therefore, I seek to follow Jesus Christ and model his values and heart with many



different types of people. I believe that teachers and other staff members will be inspired and empowered to follow Jesus Christ's example of being true servant as they perform their duties.

“It's clear that servant leadership provides the promise of effective educational leadership model”(Crippen, 2005, p. 16), where principals serve and lead teachers and increase effectiveness of the school. The spirit of sacrifice and the desire to serve is an essential in leadership.

My take of three keyways of living this style of leadership is:

To demonstrate love, humility, honor and respect in the way I interact with teachers, other members of the staff and whoever visits the school.

To have a listening ear. To listen to their views and suggestions.

Working as team aiming of achieving the desired goals of the institution or ministry.



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