
A lived servant leadership

“In the exercise of leadership, there are a series of variables of the different calibre that affect people.”

(Marist voices, chap. 11 - Brothers Gabriel Villa-Real and Pere Ferré)

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This short essay will discuss servant leadership based on my experience of life as a brother who have passed through different stages of life, initial and on-going formation and mission at provincial and regional levels. Before we go further, I wish to tell you, briefly, who I am. After my initial formation and studies, I have been mostly involved in formation ministry. Since January 2024, I'm the Provincial of Madagascar.

Since I became a Marist Brother, I have experienced servant leadership qualities of different leaders at community, provincial and global levels. In this short essay, I will highlight, as requested, two qualities most needed today in the Institute. Let us begin.

A Servant leader, a marvelous companion

Building the person through formation and involvement. Based on my experience, I consider building the person through formation and training as an important task of a servant leader. I always count myself among the privileged brothers who enjoyed a very rich variety of formative experiences right from the onset of my initial formation through ongoing formation and training. Servant leader is key in building a person for he provides an environment that purposely creates opportunities for formation and involvement through valuable experiences at all levels, provincial, regional and international. In this way, the brother who remains the main artisan of his formation, will



likely embrace optimum comfort and challenges for his own proper self-knowledge and knowledge of God, leading to self-transcendence in different dimensions of life, with ease.

Appointing for a mission. In my opinion, on-going formation and mission are always intertwined. Formation takes place while being sent for a specific task that promotes experiences, which in turn boost the mission. Appointment for a new mission after specific formation or training gives credibility to the formation itself. Such appointments are often welcomed with lots of enthusiasm and gratitude. Servant leader is that person who is aware of this fact and exercises appointment in freedom, and clairvoyance. Freedom because the leader has to be free from personal preoccupations (success of the mission for example) or past hurts. Appointments done in freedom will likely develop and maintain in the brother a consistency of holistic growth. Clairvoyance, on the other hand, is that ability to perceive things in the future or beyond normal or culturally based consideration. It is that focus with which the personal itinerary of the brother in his life is upheld. Clairvoyance makes the appointment of a brother a future oriented task, going beyond the immediate assigned mission, targeting not so much the success of the mission but the care of the brother, becoming a complete consecrated person, able to lead others in his turn.

A Servant leader, a bridge builder

Nurturing positive regard for regional and international experience. Being involved in different formation houses as a formator in the African region helped me acquire the sense of belongingness into a wider Marist family and embrace global mindset, feeling part of the Region. As the Region is made up of five administrative units, with huge sociocultural diversity, the servant leader is called upon to exercise the role of a bridge builder. This implies integrating as many brothers and lay as possible, in a

mission of regional and international nature. The call to widen our tent has never been more relevant than today and there are more and more young Marists who aspire to have a wonderful regional experience beyond their original administrative units. The task of the leader is to help develop in them this positive disposition to embrace internationality with its opportunities and challenges for personal growth. At the same time, it is necessary to manage self-doubt and confusion some Marists may have about their regional or international experiences. Fostering cooperation and solidarity establishes the basis for positive regard to this mindset. Cooperation stems from the recognition of the need for inclusivity, creativity and innovation in any Marist mission while solidarity grows from the need to support Marists who exhibit enthusiasm for initial and on-going formation. I always find it important to help develop the values of cooperation and solidarity among novices and scholastics as a prerequisite for this global involvement.

Searching actively to establish a common vision. In my experience as a formator in this regional setting, as the years pass by with new opportunities as well as threats in running and maintaining common projects such as interprovincial and regional formation houses in Africa, the new generation of today's brothers and lay may pose relevant questions about the present and the future of such houses and other projects. It is necessary to give some answers to such questions by embarking on a common search for the new vision established by all stakeholders. The servant leader makes it his responsibility to harmonize different views to create a new common vision. The end result is as important as the process itself. This process should be totally participatory, such that it elicits enthusiasm from all. In the end, the new vision hopefully, will be big enough to be allinclusive, meaning, it permits creativity and innovation for the projects as well as new dynamism, far-reaching and profound perspective for the formation and training of the brothers, lay and young people who will be involved in them.



The role of the servant leader in the Marist context is multidimensional. In this short essay, I only suggested two dimensions of the servant leader based on my experience.

A servant leader plays the role of a marvelous companion in that he provides to the brother opportunities for meaningful formative experiences. Then, a free and clairvoyant leader appoints the brother for a corresponding mission that still trains the brother to maintain the level of personal growth.

I also like the image of a leader as a bridge builder. He nurtures in the brother or lay Marist a positive regard for a regional and international experience, bridging them into a wider community of Marists, through the integration of the value of cooperation and solidarity. However, Marists who are involved in regional and international mission should still be helped by the leader to a participatory process of establishing an exciting common vision for common projects.



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