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## Leading from community: a path to life in abundance

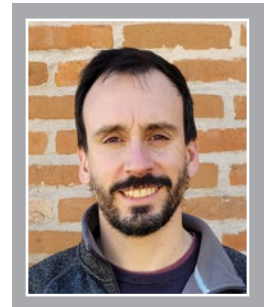
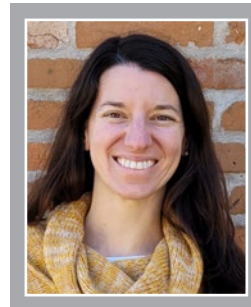
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“For a leader filled with a sense of compassion,  
nothing human is alien to him”.

(Marists Voices, chap.12 - Br. Hipólito Pérez)

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**W**e are a Marist lay couple, parents of Catalina and Salvador. We are alumni of Santa María School, located in Montevideo, and throughout our lives, we have developed various tasks in the Province and in the Marist educational centers of Uruguay. For two years, we were part of the La Vida Community along with Marist Brothers in the city of Tacuarembó, in the north of our country.

Rodrigo is currently the Coordinator of the Community Education Centre (CEC). “Marist Home” and the Centre for Child and Family Care (CAIF) “Pequeña Semilla”. Carolina is a member of the Provincial rights-protection team, a lawyer and advocate in defence of the rights of women and children, in particular women-victims of gender-based violence.

From the invitation to reflect on how we live our lives in Chapter 12 of MaristVoices, we write these brief lines, in the hope that they will be able to make sense to whoever approaches them.

The broad perspective of the book proposes that we think about servant- and prophetic- leadership in Marist life and mission. Chapter 12 emphasises the communitarian approach from the point of view of the biblical account of the multiplication of the loaves, considering seven existential attitudes: empathy, fragility, communion, mercy, profound listening, equality and giving at no cost.

It is this broad outlook that invites us to be servant- and prophetic- leaders where we are, not only in school, but also in the community, in life in general, in our family, in the Church, in our neighbourhood, in our group of friends and in other places we inhabit.

From our different community experiences – and it is especially from those – that we discover that when we deploy the dimension of the peripheries, we are able to expand the world of possi-

bilities. By that we mean that living, leading and serving from a Christian community perspective transforms the way we live, lead and serve reality to such an extent that what was left out, what was not, would be considered, or what was seen as impossible, becomes a part of life. And so, the horizons are broadened and where there are only seven loaves and two fish, a multitude eats.

The miracle does not only occur when Jesus multiplies the food, but also when the nourishment that the hungry crowd lacks is shared around. Where there seems to be nothing, there is something, and that is the beginning of the miracle. In a similar way, Marist leaders are invited to take a closer look and, before approaching the resources (in the most diverse sense of the word), we should ask ourselves where the power (strength or wealth) of the community lies. To make room, to make space, to recognize, to strengthen, to empower those who are part of our own community.

To make this move as leaders, we believe it will be necessary to be a part of an intense presence in order to really know and be recognised beyond our assigned role. We must be open to uncertainty, abandon the idea of controlling everything, because awakening and expanding the world of the possible, will give rise to the novel, the unprecedented. We must also believe, with a profound Christian hope, that in this great community called humanity, all things are possible and there is life in abundance for all.

At the beginning of 2016, less than a year after we settled down as a married couple, we responded to the Provincial's call to generate new communities. We moved to Tacuarembó, to form a community with two Marist Brothers, making room for something new to arise from the community. We weren't very clear about why we were going, but the answer was waiting for us there, on the periphery. A small community of Brothers taught us to live in the most absolute simplicity and freedom towards others. The neighbours in the area gave us the experience of Jesus, of love to the extreme, from below. Nothing we did was ours, but came from the community: a mutual friend, a new library, a clay oven, a football match, the fruit and vegetable harvest, meeting with children and adolescents, community vegetable gardens, work with other bodies in the neighbourhood, taking a real



interest in births and deaths. At each encounter Jesus is present, prompting, giving rise to and reminding us that the miracle happens in the encounter; that it is led and suffered from within the community, being part of it. That's what we went looking for, to be part of it. And the community embraced us.

To conclude, we propose two ways of living out prophetic- and servant-leadership from community. We invite you, wherever you are, to go out and meet people. In genuine encounter, with all that you are, your strengths and frailties, be open to encounter all that the other is.

In that encounter, take off your shoes before entering into the lives of others. With kindness and particular care you can relate to yourself and to other people, recognizing that God dwells in absolutely all of us and bearing in mind every day that because we have the same Father God and the same Mother Mary, we are brothers and sisters.

From wherever in the world you are, we look on you with tenderness and embrace you with love. You have read these lines today and broadened the universe of the possible, giving rise to the new. We encourage you to take the lead in everyday life, forming community and allowing others to see the God who dwells in the world, in you.



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)

