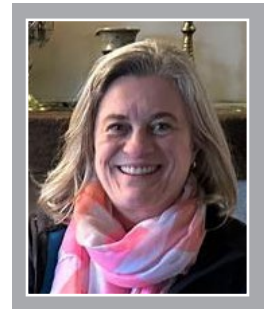

Effective communication for training servant leaders

“Leadership means inclusiveness and outreach,
not dominance and power.”
(Sadhguru)

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One question has always troubled me, and it often resurfaces in my thoughts: “Are we born leaders or do we become leaders?”. I’ve heard various theories on the subject, and I’m increasingly convinced that it is possible to learn to be a leader over the course of our personal and professional journey, through constant effort on the part of those who take on or are charged with this ministry. Faced with life’s challenges, we are invited to take the lead in this endeavour. When we understand the power of communication, we find shortcuts and springboards that propel us forward.

Regardless of where we were born or grew up, we are all capable of becoming leaders. For some, this journey will be easier and more straightforward. For others, it will require more dedication. But for both, it requires effort and commitment. The use of effective communication to drive this journey forward strengthens and facilitates the gaining of the final goal.

The challenge is to develop communication that brings people together and inspires them through an attitude of service to others. Lead by example, with passion and the commitment to encourage those around us. This attitude needs to permeate the entire life of anyone willing to be a point of reference and lead a team. When we think we are ready, we will have taken a step backwards, because there is no such thing as fully-formed and absolute leadership. It is a journey that is built day by day with mistakes and successes, with advances and setbacks. Learning comes from literature, being taught, mentors and, above all, teams.

It is through assertive communication that leaders identify opportunities to serve their team members. They are the ones who show their staff how they can improve. Even in silence, through

non-verbal language, they point out ways of improvement. Evidence can be gathered from looks, gestures, demonstrations and words. It's up to the leader to learn how to listen to them.

The manager's attitude reveals the style of leadership adopted. When we take away autonomy, we suppress the ability to create. Unnecessary hierarchies and excessive rules frustrate the development of individuals. On the contrary, when we promote an environment of innovation, creativity and autonomy, we correctly fulfil the role delegated to the leader, which is to serve a purpose and a mission, having a motivating attitude based on an evangelical inspiration built on Christian foundations promoting ethics and a commitment to justice and life.

Recently, in 2022, in an event organised by the Marist Institute, a group of Marist leaders from Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries was called to reflect on servant and prophetic leadership. I was among them and I realised that each one of us was inspired to learn and relearn how to be a leader. Reading, classes, talks, inspiring conversations, examples of experiences, sharing and a lot of reflection that touched minds and hearts took place at the event. It was an invitation to a marvellous path from which there was no turning back, just moving forward, adjusting behaviour and remodelling mental models.

On this journey, one of the points that stirred my heart was chapter 13 of the book *MaristVoices*, where Brother Cyprian Gandeebo, Provincial of the Province of West Africa, relates Servant Leadership to Communication. "Efficient communication breeds forgiveness and reconciliation... The continual existence of human institutions hinges on their ability to communicate with each other" (Pages 214 - 215). He goes on to say that "good communication leads to effective leadership" (Page 215), as it inspires and motivates followers to work towards institutional goals.

I consider myself a communicator by nature and by profession. Almost three decades ago, I chose communication to develop my professional life. With a desire to change the world, I went



to university to study journalism and advertising. I've always believed that good communication is transformative and causes profound change. Later, I immersed myself in the world of Corporate Communication, Marketing and Institutional Relations.

At each of these stages, I was called to be a leader of myself, of teams, of leaders, of functions and of areas. I am currently in charge of Institutional and Government Relations for Grupo Marista of the Marist Province of Brasil Centro Sul and I have the challenge of leading people and projects. I realise how much assertive communication contributes to this role. It acts as an instrument to facilitate the spirit of service and to stimulate the capacity to be prophetic.

It's a challenge that sets things in motion, because it's about inspiration and a dream. It's about changing the world, something that has motivated me since I was a teenager, when I dreamed of a society without inequalities, where everyone without distinction would have decent living conditions, thus fulfilling Jesus' mission on earth. "I have come that all may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).

As Brother Luis Carlos Gutierrez describes in Chapter 20 of *MaristVoices*. "...to lead means to have the possibility to inspire, first oneself and then other people; to glimpse new horizons for the present and the future; it is also a way of living certain values for which it is worthwhile committing time and one's whole life." (Page 357)

And so we move towards prophetic and servant leadership, seeking to transform the world through the restless attitude of those who dream of an equal society, where everyone can enjoy life with fulfilment and serenity.



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