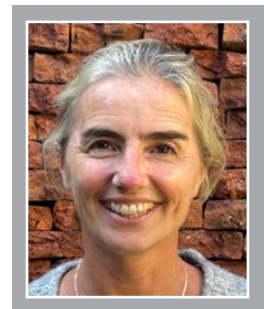

Servant leadership... Attentive and meaningful

“God is presence. In the spirituality bequeathed to us by Marcellin, the theme of God’s presence is central. I discovered it in events, everywhere, in difficulties, when he prayed and when he celebrated the Eucharist with piety and recollection”.
(Marist Voices, chap.2 - Br. Ernesto Sánchez)

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My journey in this beloved community began when I was 5 years old as a student in the preparatory school Juan Zorrilla de San Martín, a Marist School in Montevideo, Uruguay.

It was 1977 and the school was beginning to incorporate girls into its student body. A boys’ school was evolving into a co-educational school. As I look back at my journey as a Marist student and my thirty-one years as a Marist educator, I can truly say: I have been very blessed!

The brothers and lay teachers who taught me left me a lasting impression in my heart. I integrated their philosophy and educational principles as catechist, principal and director of Early Education and Primary Education in the school where I was formed as a student, the Zorrilla School.

That period of time was marked by significant personal growth. I would like to offer a reflection of my role as a school principal. The Latin “recordare”, to remember which pierces the heart. I want to remember the eleven years of unforgettable heartfelt experiences which have made me grow as a person and as a professional educator—teamwork, accompaniment, presence, trust in God, audacity, vocation, service, companionship.... All of them involve interaction with teachers, students, families and the educational community in general. This profound learning experience has left me with two inspirational impressions I would like to share with you.

1. Accompaniment is a fundamental key to the servant leader. Accompaniment implies presence, attentive listening, teamwork, and being open to empathetic encounters with the other.

We need to live this set of skills with great respect, humility and simplicity, knowing that we are instruments of God at any given time.

2. A sense of community--to learn to live with others, to be with others. We are connected, interdependent with others; we cannot be loners. From a servant leadership perspective, this idea of being with others is a strong and powerful call that invites us to bring out the best in each other.

With this frame of reference, I would like to share a little bit of how I experienced this servant leadership in terms of accompaniment, listening and presence. To do so, I am going to take one of the dimensions that we leaders have to take on: pedagogical leadership.

I always enjoyed making frequent visits to the playgrounds, hallways, to visit the classrooms and help students them with their assignments; this way, I might be able understand that in order to innovate pedagogically, it is necessary to become familiar with learning methods, curriculum content, teacher needs, professional guidance and accompaniment; to be able to walk together as a community--directors, teachers, families, to build a school as a nucleus of “learning, life, evangelization and innovation” (In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: MEM, 2023, 144, p. 89).

Pedagogical leaders must enhance the art of teaching. “To teach is to open windows to the world without restrictions of any kind”, Alliaud, (2021, p.29) points out.

What do we need to teach in our schools? If we think of teaching as an invitation to students to take an interest in the world, then we as educators must consider how to present the world, how to make it interesting, challenging and thought-provoking for those in our care. And while teaching



and learning are words that may be interchangeable, they are not always so.

When we teach, we do so in the pursuit of learning, even if we sometimes fall short. The question we might ask ourselves is: What kind of learning do we want our students to achieve? Profound learning, learning that endures? These and other questions will undoubtedly lead us to think about what we mean by learning, teaching, assessing, changing... This type of reflection is something that we, as leaders, need to answer. In short, it makes us focus on the profound and important challenge that we cannot push aside. For this, we need to stop, listen, sense, think and act.



Today, I am still a Marist educator, called to put to good use my leadership skills on provincial teams. Today, I accompany resource teams and principals in their roles and functions. I feel that the task carried out by a director is fundamental for our apostolates to continue to be places of welcome, of life, of learning, of culture, of evangelization.

Grateful for the road traveled, for what I have experienced, learned and shared, I close this presentation with a verse from a tune that I often hum in silence:

*This story that we all love is not a memory, it is now a reality,
in you and in me, there is his love that makes us walk...*

Live in your heart what He dreamt of

Let a new illusion spring from you.

Marcellin is today, in your response of love...



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

