
Lead with people's development in mind

“To inspire the team, the leader must be perceived as a person who is open to dialogue, generous, integrated and competent in knowing how to get things done”.

(Marist Voices, chap.10 - Br. José Libardo Garzón Duque)

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Since 2012, when I first encountered the Marist charism, I have devoted my energies and efforts into this honorable mission of transforming the world through education and making Jesus Christ known and loved.

Thus far, I have had the privilege of traveling through some areas of the Marist Province of Brasil Centro Sul, where I have been able to learn and contribute to the mission. I began my journey in the management of the province's social schools, where among other things I was responsible for the network's strategic planning, budget and indicators. I have also worked on special projects associated with the Marist Centre for the Defense of Children and Adolescents and the Canonical Solidarity Sector of our Province. It was a transformative time in my life; it broadened my vision and my approach to the world.

Since 2018, I have been working in higher education at the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná. My current mission is to manage the Institutional Identity Department and to teach at the University's Business School. In addition, I was privileged and proud to have contributed to the Africa and Asia Mission Sustainability Project.

The leadership mission I carry out today emerges from many sources. As a teacher, leadership manifests itself in two ways:

Firstly, as a teacher whose sole responsibility is to be an exemplar of service, of welcoming and leadership for the students.

Secondly, because I teach Leadership at the Business School, the subject of leadership is very much alive in my professional work.

In addition, we have the crucial responsibility of focusing our academic experiences on students, teachers, collaborators and the external community of our Marist Identity. We vigorously support

the view that what differentiates education at our university from any other is precisely the attributes of our identity that are worked on for and with our academic community. Among the key features I would like to highlight are Coexistence, Spirituality, the Culture of Care, Integral Formation, the Scientific Spirit and Socio-emotional Solidarity. They are elementary attributes that shape our Marian way of educating.

As an administrator, I would like to start this reflection on leadership by saying that the way in which leadership is exercised by managers is directly associated with organizational culture and team performance. The role of leadership in the contemporary, global world is fundamental to strengthening a company's culture and its role in the world.

The understanding and concept of leadership is ever involving and is highly impacted by socio-cultural changes. It is well known that in the past, it was believed that leaders were born with a disposition to lead and that it was not possible for someone without this disposition to exercise leadership. They also looked for physical characteristics that could be associated with leadership, such as gender, height, tone of voice and posture. As research and society advanced, the understanding that leadership was more associated with behavioral elements than physical ones began to emerge. From then on, we began to categorize leadership into styles, including autocratic, democratic, a non-interventionist approach and others. Scientific literature progressed in its quest to understand the role of leadership in organizations.

In dynamic leadership, concepts and understandings change because society changes, as do habits, needs and planet evolution. Leadership is increasingly a place of responsibility rather than achievement. Achieving the position of leader within an organization will require a higher-caliber human skill to exercise that position.

Today's demands are more complex, ambiguous, fragile and non-linear. That is where the fun of leading is embedded. As Edgar Morin tells us, the leader is a work in progress and one of ambiguity. In other words, the leader never reaches the final goal; he/she is always defining himself, always searching. It is inaccurate to think of a leader as someone who is a finished product.

And in this context, the highest degree of refinement for a leader comes from servant and prophetic leadership. The most basic premise of a leader who serves is "liking people", yes, that is correct - it is essential that a leader feel comfortable with people, know how to welcome, guide, put himself/herself in their place, be patient, and know how to listen actively. To do this, you just must like people.

In his book *The Leader Serves Last*, author Simon Sinek states that the more distant we are from our leaders, the more likely we are to treat them indifferently. Closeness is not an assumption, it is a necessity to create bonds, establish a relationship of trust with people, transmit security, confidence and honesty.

What brings complexity to this model of leadership, like poison and its antidote, is all about



balance. You see, we must recognize that servant and prophetic leadership can be confused with leadership that is overly friendly and caring. However, leadership does not take place by the mere welcoming, but in the way he/she guides and forms his/her followers.

The leader must find meaningful ways of guiding and shaping the situation. Their supporters will follow his/her example more than their words. Therefore, it is not just about listening and welcoming, but also guiding, accompanying, being close to, inspiring, making the most of potential. All this from a servant and prophetic point of view. This is the beauty of the model.

By prophesying, the leader also establishes objectives, beliefs and removes the restraints and limitations of those they lead. He provokes positively, and by serving, he creates the conditions for his followers to seek and achieve what has been prophesied. It is a complex equation, but beautiful and powerful.

There are some practical elements that I believe help to build a servant administrator:

Psychological safety: as a leader you must ensure that your team members feel safe to speak your mind, to make suggestions and contribute to the team members. Ideas must be fostered and encouraged and under no circumstances discouraged or ignored. Many of the incredible solutions that organizations produce materialize through a collegiate process of co-creation.

Contextualizing decisions and guidelines: I believe that when we take care to explain our decision-making process, giving context and detail, we increase the sense of cooperation and trust with the team.

Integral well-being: it is natural for leaders to recognize the strengths and further the proper enhancement of their team members based not only on the technical elements of the job, but also encouraging self-care and personal development activities for their team members. These mechanisms can help their development and performance.

Common agenda and integrity: it is easy to see whether your agenda as a leader is primarily focused on the good of the organization or on your own self-interests. When those you lead perceive your commitment and integrity in favor of the organization's mission, it will generate positive impact through your example.



Three for one: we tend to find known answers to mapped problems. Leaders and team members together mutually encourage new, creative solutions to challenges. Three for one means that, together with the team, the leader must look for at least three plausible solutions to each challenge. By doing this collectively, the leader will also help to calibrate creativity towards innovative solutions within ethical and moral parameters that are in concert with the organization.



Training people and not winning followers: the role of the leader is complex and one of the biggest challenges is dealing with their own ego. It is a mistake to train people to think or act like the leadership; one must create the environment for them to discern and act autonomously and from a common organizational agenda.

Taking your place behind the scenes: the result of good leadership is a competent team. Therefore, leaders must give up their place on stage whenever their team members are ready to take center stage. This is service.

These are simple reflections resulting from what I have seen, studied and experienced. Much of what I write is the result of empirical tests of how I try to develop in leadership. And of course, we can stand on the shoulders of giants to see farther, which is why it is important to learn from those we admire, be it from books or from our mentors.

These elements are fundamental to the successful development of leadership centered on people, on a common agenda, endowed with ethical and moral values, guardians of our common home and attentive to the signs of the times.



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