

Leadership

Important Characteristics of a Servant Leadership

The Servant Leader gives people responsibility for their own actions in the workplace and recognizes the talents and strengths of each one. It further encourages those led in their actions and personal growth, showing that they are not mere subordinates but unique individuals.

The leader must be humble to acknowledge that the members may have more knowledge and experience than the leader. By recognizing the limits of knowledge itself, it encourages the creation of a learning environment: in which all can learn from each other and develop through their own experience.

The ability to understand and experience the feelings and motivations of others is essential to a culture of servant leadership. By accepting those led as individuals, the servant leader must be understanding and empathic with those who work with her.

The true servant leader is one who finds the balance between serving and leading. It offers all the support they need. She is a leader, but not a dictator, and is always open to dialogue. The servant leader in no way serves as a title to show that she is in charge. She does not think she is superior to others and acts in a careful way.

The Renewal of Religious Life

After the Vatican II, religious life underwent several changes. *"¹The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. Since religious life has as its ultimate norm the following of Christ as proposed in the Gospel, this should be the supreme rule of all Institutes"*. Part of the process of change is the way our congregation has addressed the basics by dividing them into four pillars:

- Pluriformity
- Subsidiarity
- Solidarity
- Collegiality

1. Pluriformity: in our congregation there are different cultures, mentalities and also differences in development and dispositions. The way spirituality is expressed in the community may be different from others in the community.

We must support each other, trust in the honesty with which each gives meaning to the religious life. For this reason we cannot consider as correct only a single way to live the consecrated life. Pluriformity enriches the congregation, brings new configurations of religious life and opens space for the novelty of the Gospel, valuing what unites us, exalting equality and differences. We are convinced that the various forms of religious life can be authentic.

2. Subsidiarity: The principle of subsidiarity must be realized within a decentralized form of government. Within the structure as a whole, provinces, pre-provinces, post-provinces and communities have a certain measure of autonomy, in an environment of co-responsibility. The principle of subsidiarity means that the dignity of each person and the rights of the smaller communities as well as of the larger provinces must be respected and initiatives of groups and individuals under the responsibility of some administrative sphere should be encouraged.

3. Solidarity: Each province, pre-province, post-province, community is co-responsible for achieving the purpose of the congregation. Solidarity is promoted by mutual information; intense communication between all levels; mutual assistance and cooperation in all possible ways.

4. Collegiality: We use this word to describe the companionship and cooperation between colleagues who share responsibility. Since Vatican II women and men religious nurture the spirit of collegiality within community. The important process of “coming to consensus” within community will be developed by Sister Helen Cahill, OP during the ICC meeting.

The collegiality in our congregation makes all the people who are assuming a role of authority aware that the governing body is a team, where decisions are taken together aiming at the best for the Congregation. The person who exercises authority is a member of a team. At all levels of government, members must grow toward collegiality in decision-making.

References:

The Servant as Leader, written by Robert K. Greenleaf.

¹Decree Perfectae Caritatis : Document of Vatican Council II

Document from the 1969 Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of Mercy General Chapter”

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Reflect on your own experience of leadership.

- What qualities have you experienced as life giving?
- What qualities do you feel have inhibited your growth as a person?