

Co-responsible Leadership



Characteristics of
SS.CC. Co-responsible Leadership



Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

- b. In a sharing of life in community, discern what is the way of conversion to be undertaken in our community so that all will become more conscious of their responsibility in the life and Mission of the community and take the concrete means to live it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SS.CC. CORESPONSABLE LEADERSHIP

I. INTRODUCTION

What can we say about leadership that a Franciscan or a Dominican can't say? Here is a surprise question to inaugurate the ongoing formation program on coresponsible leadership. This program proposed by the General Government is intended to be something other than just an exercise requested of the communities; it is a long way from that. This leaflet deals with the first theme: **To search and meditate on what characterizes the coresponsible way of living leadership in the Congregation.**

Each of us has her own experience of leadership in the Congregation ... sharing it, contemplating it others will enrich us. Here, as in other aspects of our life, it is a matter of entering into the interior dynamism of the Love of God revealed in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, servants par excellence. Called to make our own the attitudes and sentiments of Christ, to make our hearts meek and humble like unto His, we must continually be converted to better witness the ss.cc. charism.

In the account of the multiplication of the loaves, the disciples, inspired by Love, begin to serve. Exchange of bread and hearts between the child and Jesus, between Jesus and the disciples, between the disciples and the crowd. Everything circulates, everything communicates. The essential is what happens in the hearts.

II. CONTEMPLATE THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

A. Describe the lived experience

1. Personal reflection

- a. According to my initial and ongoing formation until present what characterizes ss.cc. leadership? What is my basis for saying this?
- b. What has been my experience of authority, (“active” and “passive”) in the Congregation?
- c. How am I living it now in my community? How do I characterize it?

2. Community sharing of personal experiences regarding leadership

B. Analysis of the lived experience

- a. What enables me to offer my “2 fish and 5 loaves” to contribute to the service of coresponsible leadership which is specifically ss.cc.? Why?
- b. What are the principal difficulties that I encounter? Why might I feel frustrated? In what do I feel like a living stone, a foundress, for today with my Sisters in community?
- c. Community sharing of the personal reflections. What are the most significant positive and negative manifestations of coresponsibility in the community? Where and in what are they most lacking?

III. ENLIGHTENMENT

A. References

1. The Word of God

Lk 22, 24-27

“A dispute arose among them about who should be regarded as the greatest. He said: ‘Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called their benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant. Who, in fact, is the greater – he who reclines at table or he who serves the meal? Is it not the one who reclines at table? Yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you.’”

Jn 13, 14-15

“But if I washed your feet – I who am Teacher and Lord – then you must wash each other’s feet. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do.”

1 Cor 10, 17

“Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

reasonable...” To the Good Mother, April 28, 1827.

Live under the action of the Spirit

“I really wish that the spirit of the Good God will never leave any of you. For that, be well united. It is really sad when small personal pretensions ruin humility. I have never doubted your devotedness toward the work, my dear son; but you will always do well for the family and for yourself when you are meek and humble of heart.” (BP. 745) February 26, 1822, to Fr. Alexis Bachelot who was leaving for the Sandwich Islands.

Govern with humility

“The humility of having made a mistake fits everybody well, so in confessing aloud that this happens to me often, would this avowal made at times by a good brother who is not infallible, be a sin?” To Bro. Séverin Coulonges, February 18, 1836.

Express with a little humor

“My good friend, try to act more justly with your confreres. They cannot speak to you of matters of which they are not more sure than you are. You should not be so sensitive to trifles.” To Bro. Philippe Fezandier, July 19, 1812.

“... truthfully speaking, my friend, you have a way of treating others like an absolute master, and I assure you, this is bad. A bit of conciliation goes so well when one has authority...” To Fr. Hippolyte Launay, October 17, 1822.

B. Personal reflection

In what way do these texts enlighten me so that I can collaborate coresponsibly today in leadership? What helps me, what raises questions? Why? How am I challenged in my daily life?

IV. THE WAY OF CONVERSION

- a. At the end of my personal reflection and community sharing, what is the path of conversion that I feel able to undertake to participate more actively and coresponsibly in the life and Mission of the community, the Province/Region/PPC, of the Congregation?

union, that tender charity which is part of happiness in religious life. Support the weak, encourage the strong; do not tire them too much, finally, do your best. (August 26, 1821)

To Philippine Coudrin, December 24, 1820: "I beg you, my dear, not to torment yourself, but to run the house according to regulation. This will be easy because you are few and all of good will. Try to establish Christian charity that resembles the politeness of the world, but isn't too much like it. Be all united in the Divine Hearts. May all the good Sisters find in you a gentle superior, affable and full of zeal for the glory of God."

September 13, 1821 (from Hilarion Lucas) "Always be gentle, good, affable, with the amiability which, wins hearts, and easily makes an impression that does not shock. Be preoccupied with yourself the least possible and very concerned with the others for God, and all will go well.

➤ The Good Father...

Mutual obedience

"Love one another. Bear the little crosses which will be inevitable because of the diversity of characters. Have but one heart and one soul. Be kind and obedient toward one another. Let each one not adhere too much to his own ideas. It is more in conformity with the will of God to give in a little for the common good, than to demand the best when the difference between the two is not an evil in itself." October 1826.

In the circular letter of Nov. 11, 1826, citing the rule of St. Benedict (n° 72) the Good Father writes to all the Brothers and Sisters: "They are warned of mutual honors; they support without impatience corporal and moral infirmities; they practice obedience to one another enviably; no one seeks his own advantage, but rather that of others; they practice fraternal charity disinterestedly."

Trust

"I rely upon your prudence and am well convinced that whatever you do is always for the best." To Sr. Gabriel, September 9, 1809.

"If M. Martial is too worried, have him come with M. Raphael (Bonamie); you are on the spot. You are good friends. I approve whatever you do, for I am convinced that you will do what is best." To Fr. Césaire Carre, October 14, 1819.

"Place yourselves in God's presence, and do what you think is

Eph 4, 11-16

"It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ, till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature and come to perfection in Christ. Let us, then, be children no longer, tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine that originates in human trickery and skill in proposing error. Rather, let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through him the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love."

2. A Contemporary Vision of Leadership

"Hearts Afire: Leadership in the New Millennium"

Extract from LCWR presidential address August 1997; cf. Review for Religious Jan-Feb 1998.

..Leadership is a journey of the heart. ... Spiritual leaders are comfortable with their own spirituality and ...nurture the spiritual development of others. ...

Spiritual leaders empower their communities for ongoing commitment by keeping questions of meaning before them: Why are we together in community? How are we called to the unique circumstances of these times? What is our commitment to one another and to those with whom we journey? In times of substantive change there is an extraordinary need to explore questions of meaning and purpose.

At the deepest level, our congregations are held together by myths, values, beliefs, and foundational stories. These are the roots of the congregation's identity and purpose. They constitute the why of our being together as communities. They have their effect on the passion with which we live our mission. They influence the way we use resources, the way we work together to press the mission forward. The shared meaning and work and memory of our lives together provide symbols, relationships, and principles for making sense of the changes going on within us and around us. Shared meaning is essential for shared commitment.

Spiritual leadership is a group process rather than an individual's personal qualities or skills. It is interactive and relational. When members of a community are closely involved in piecing shared meanings together as a basis

for corporate action or direction, they experience significance together, discovery together, leadership together. Today, as many congregations grapple with issues of governance and restructuring, it is a key function of leadership to foster meaning-making together.

3. Congregational Documents

Almost always, the Good Father and the Good Mother addressed their correspondence to Superiors but very often the message was for the whole community. It even happened, especially at the beginning when the communities were few, that they named the members one by one. Of course, we live in another time than that of our Founders. Their first concern was not to write texts but to live and respond to the urgencies of the times. It is, nevertheless, interesting to pinpoint some fundamental characteristics linked to their way of governing (leadership).

➤ The Good Mother...

An intense spiritual life

She repeated often in her letters:

“All to God, all in God, all for God.”

“All for God and nothing except what will please Him.”

“All for God, little else matters. Courage, patience and perseverance.”

“All for God: let this be our motto.”

A great humility

From Gabriel de la Barre: “It is difficult to have understood better than she what true humility consists in. I saw her unjustly blamed in an odious way and I saw her praised, and her soul did not feel any impression neither of pain nor of pleasure. She told me good or bad about herself, be that as it may, with the same indifference as if she were speaking of another.”

“I noticed,” says Sr. Radegonde, “the great humility of the Good Mother. Having spoken a bit sharply to a Sister, she would immediately say: ‘I have pained you, will you please forgive me?’”

A compassionate heart

June 27, 1809: “... I am surprised that N.... did not speak to me about her difficulties; in a word I would have relieved them. It is no longer the time. Be compassionate with her weaknesses, try to encourage her...”

July 28, 1817, she wrote to a Superior: “our good little Sisters who although very light, very scatterbrained, have very good will and a great desire to do the will of God and to be saved.”

Sister Hortense Privat, arriving from Mende where they required much silence of the young people was a little surprised, when she had passed a few days in the Sisters’ novitiate in Paris, and saw the lightness of a great number of novices who for the most part were very young. She confessed with simplicity to the Good Mother that the behavior of the novices did not edify her. Mother Henriette said with a smile: “My Dear, imagine that the Heart of Jesus who rejects no one is here.”

“Manage your young Ladies and try to reform their excessive lightness. Your matadors have much trouble in accepting them, they do not understand the youth. In the end, it is better to laugh than to constantly grumble.” (July 10, 1817)

A capacity to ask for forgiveness

Sister Irélie Leblanc gives this testimony: “It happened to me several times that the Good Mother asked me to excuse her. One time I was at her side during Mass and noticed that she did not have her handkerchief. Seeing that she was getting up to go and get it, I wanted to save her this trouble, but she stopped me and scolded me. As soon as the Mass was over and she had me leave the church, she hugged me and offered signs of friendship, saying: “My poor dear, I have so poorly repaid you.”

“In 1824, in early January, the Good Mother held the Chapter. After having spoken a few minutes, she rose and said: “My good Sisters, I make my self-accusation and ask your pardon for all the grief that I have caused you during the past year. I know that I have often caused you sorrow; this is against my heart, I would rather make you happy, that is my desire...” She could not say more, her emotion, the tears which fell prevented her from it.

A sense of realism

June 26, 1818 to a Superior tired from a thousand little contradictions: “... In the meetings there are always clouds more or less dark. It is only in heaven that we will all be happy forever... don’t let yourself be demolished by vicissitudes, by this life of sorrow and tears.”

A direct way of encouraging and giving counsel

“Try to maintain the fervor, cheerfulness, good nature, simplicity, and