

Coresponsible Leadership



Coresponsibility and Subsidiarity



Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

B. Personal reflection

- a. What do these texts say to me?
- b. How are the principles of coresponsibility and subsidiarity lived out personally and in community?
- c. What positive or negative experiences do I want to share?
- d. In your opinion, what are the greatest risks incurred if the principles of coresponsibility and subsidiarity are not practiced?

IV. THE WAY OF CONVERSION

- a. While working on this theme what calls have I heard for myself and for the community?
- b. What concrete and possible responses can we make?

Coresponsibility and Subsidiarity

I. INTRODUCTION

For the past few years the Congregation has been making an important journey of renewal regarding coresponsibility and subsidiarity. Some signs of this are the general practice in the communities of drawing up community projects and the existence of commissions to collaborate with provincial governments in the animation of the provinces.

Despite the progress made, we still need to learn how to live coresponsibility and subsidiarity in the service of coresponsible animation better each day.

The last General Chapter asked us to participate more directly in making decisions which concern the life and the mission of the Congregation. (Cf. General Chapter 2000 Decisions) This means we must look at each Sister in a new way to discover and welcome her gifts, develop her talents and assure her participation whether by her reflections, advice, actions or simply by her presence and interest.

This leaflet is an invitation to reflect on how coresponsibility and subsidiarity are lived in our life and mission today. The logo for this process reminds us that Jesus could have given food to the multitude himself, but he wanted to involve the apostles. Similarly, he counted on the bread and fish offered by the boy. (Lk 9, 10-17)

II. CONTEMPLATE THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

A. Describe the lived experience

1. Personal reflection

What significant experiences (positive or negative) have I had in relation to coresponsibility and subsidiarity?

2. Community sharing

How do we understand coresponsibility and subsidiarity and how do we live it?

B. Analysis of the lived experience

1. Personal reflection

- a. How do the above-mentioned experiences affect me at this time?
- b. How have I been changed because of them?
- c. What difficulties have I encountered?

2. Community sharing

- a. Share your personal reflections.
- b. What challenge does this present for the community?

III. ENLIGHTENMENT

A. References

1. The Word of God

Ex 18, 13-26.

"The next day Moses sat in judgment for the people, who waited about him from morning until evening. When his father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he inquired, 'What sort of thing is this that you are doing for the people? ...Why do you sit alone while all the people have to stand about you from morning till evening?' Moses answered his father-in-law, 'The people come to me to consult God. Whenever they have a disagreement, they come to me to have me settle the matter between them and make known to them God's decisions and regulations.' 'You are not acting wisely,' his father-in-law replied. 'You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing

... In a government of subsidiarity and coresponsibility, a person do not abdicate her own responsibilities. She assumes the tasks and competencies which are hers, without passing them to a higher authority. She carries out her tasks responsibly and does not invade other people's areas, interfering in a lower level of government, nor does she allow others to intervene or interfere in her area of competence. At the same time, she is not excessively zealous of her "autonomy"; but defends it from a true sense of responsibility.

. . . In a government of subsidiarity and coresponsibility, the authority is the active memory, which reminds all of what they have freely decided to be in fidelity to a charism and mission, and encourages all to live this charism and this mission.

...The secret of a superior is to reach the maximum coresponsibility and participation of her immediate collaborators. And the secret of all government - superior and councilors - is to reach the maximum cooperation and coresponsibility of all the other members of the respective community. This is the best way to assure that all the energies - qualities and natural and graced gifts of persons - are put to the service of the Reign, through an active and responsible collaboration of one and all.

In this way, true complementarity in the service of authority and in the whole life and mission of the Institute is achieved, at its respective levels. Also, this avoids the danger of having to find an almost "impossible" woman, who miraculously embodies all qualities and virtues, which still seem to exist in some constitutions. It is sufficient to find an intelligent person, who loves her sisters, and knows how to express the love of God intelligibly to them, and who identifies with the living heart of the charism-mission of the Institute. In everything else, the sisters will assist her providing she asks and lets herself be helped and providing she knows how to foster collaboration, coresponsibility and teamwork.

Severino Maria Alonso

*Translated with feminine pronouns.

- **Our SS.CC. Vocation and Mission**

“The Superiors must encourage coresponsibility at all times. They themselves must form a government team, creating with their Councils a true communion of spirit, and consulting with the sisters wherever possible before making decisions that affect them. They must respect the principle of subsidiarity, and the liberty of all, leaving ample room for responsible initiatives among the sisters .” Patrick Bradley, ss.cc., p. 91

4. Contemporary Authors

- **Coresponsibility**

Coresponsibility has three essential elements:

- a. The fact of being responsible with one or more persons;
- b. The ability to exercise this responsibility in union with her or them;
- c. The ability to carry out together the agreed-upon actions.

... There are two kinds of coresponsibility: egalitarian and differentiated.
... Egalitarian coresponsibility exists when persons, with the same title, share a common responsibility. It is this way, in general and provincial chapters when the members make collegial decisions; all votes have the same weight.
... Differentiated coresponsibility is more frequent. It exists when persons share the same responsibility but with different titles. For example, superiors and their councils... even though superiors have the power to make decisions, the council members are associated with the decision of the authority by giving their advice or consent, but in the strict sense they do not decide.
... Coresponsibility can only be exercised validly under certain conditions, the first of which is the identification of the respective competencies.

- **Subsidiarity And Coresponsibility In Religious Government**

“Subsidiarity implies, supposes and is a ‘hierarchization of faculties’ and competencies, a true decentralization, and the theoretical and practical recognition of the relative autonomy that each person has in the accomplishment of her* task and that each community has with respect to its life and mission.

them how they are to live and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.’

Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law and did all that he had suggested. He picked out able men from all Israel and put them in charge of the people as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. They rendered decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. The more difficult cases they referred to Moses, but all the lesser cases they settled themselves.”

Lk 9, 1-6.10

“He summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. And as for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them.’ Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

When the apostles returned, they explained to him what they had done. He took them and withdrew in private to a town called Bethsaida.”

Acts 6, 1-6

“At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy

Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.”

Rom 12, 4-5;

“For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”

2. Documents of the Church

▪ **Fraternal Life in Community**

5e. “New governing structures emerged from revised constitutions requiring far greater participation on the part of men and women religious. This has led to a different way of approaching problems through community dialogue, co-responsibility and subsidiarity. All members became involved in the problems of the community. This greatly affected interpersonal relationships and, in turn, affected the way authority is perceived. In not a few cases authority then encountered practical difficulties in finding its true place within the new context.”

50b. “An authority conducive to unity is one concerned to create a climate favorable to sharing and co-responsibility; to encourage all to contribute to the affairs of all; to encourage members to assume and to respect responsibility; to promote, by their respect for the human person, voluntary obedience; to listen willingly to the members, promoting their harmonious collaboration for the good of the institute and the Church; to engage in dialogue and offer timely opportunities for encounter; to give courage and hope in times of difficulty; to look ahead and point to new horizons for mission.”

51. “It is also necessary that the proper law of each institute be as precise as possible in determining the respective competence of the community, the various councils, departmental coordinators and the superior. A lack of clarity in this area is a source of confusion and conflict.

Community projects, which can help increase participation in community life and in its mission in various contexts, should also take care to define clearly the role and competence of authority in line with the constitutions.”

3. Congregational Documents

▪ **The Good Father**

“You are on the spot, so use your judgment. Do whatever you think is best and do not refer the decision back to me”. Good Father to Fr. Hippolyte Launay, Jan 25, 1812.

▪ **Constitutions**

50. “Our unity despite different backgrounds, ages, personalities and mentalities reveals the presence of God's saving Love in our midst. The local Superior, in her role as animator, is at the service of communion in the life and mission of the community. Mutual acceptance and respect for the diversity of persons and gifts strengthen this unity and enable us to experience joy and hope.”

53. “Together we develop a program of life and mission best suited to the common good, our concrete reality, and the options and mission of the community. This program is submitted to the Provincial and her council for approval. Each of us takes an active share in the responsibility of building the apostolic community day by day.

108. “At every level the ministry of authority calls for the participation of all, for subsidiarity, for the practice of discernment and for accountability.”

▪ **Rule of Life**

38. “Respect for charisms is a norm for all to follow in daily living. Each one must have the opportunity to fulfill [her] proper role in the community, so that [she] may really gift it with [her] unique contribution. Diversity of charisms does not block the unity of the community and its activity; quite the contrary, it builds it up. It is when gifts and persons complement each other that the organic unity of a the whole church community comes into being as the true unity of a body.”

88. “All take part actively and with a feeling of coresponsibility in the actual organization of life together, in financial administration, and in the direction of the apostolate.”