



Formation for Leadership

(Module 03)

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1. RATIONALE: Understanding the Concept

Leadership is a real phenomenon that most of us are familiar with. We have leaders almost in each and every group, church, institution, and nation. However, different groups and institutions understand leadership and apply it according to their taste. For example, some feel to lead is to lord it over others, to be tyrants. They are the bosses! Parker J. Palmer in his book “Let Your Life Speak” writing about ‘Leadership from within’ said leadership is a concept we often resist. It seems immodest, even self-aggrandizing, to think of ourselves as leaders. But if it is true that we are made for community, then leadership is everyone’s vocation. Modesty is only one reason we resist the idea of leadership.

To Christian believers Jesus is the model and example of servant leadership, whom the faithful strive to follow. The significance of leadership lies in leading the subjects to witness prophetic mission and deepen their spiritual life. In *Vita Consecrata*, Pope St. John Paul II looks at leadership as a formation journey, “growth in spiritual life and for mission” within our localities.

Archbishop Martin Eamon of Dublin in his opening address during a round table discussion at Marino Institute of Education, 2015, reiterated, “leadership must be considered as a calling and a gift. It is not a calling to satisfy our personal ambition. It is given for the well being of our institution. It is not for our own benefits but to build up the body of Christ. It is not surprising that many people resist a call to leadership- ‘Not I Lord, hope you don’t mean me!’” Moses when he was asked to lead the Israelites out of Egypt he said: “*who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*” (Exod 3:13); the objection of Moses was realistic: “*suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?*” (Exod 4:1). Likewise the call of Jeremiah, he looked at himself as not worthy the ministry he was being given: “*Ah, Lord God! I do not know how to speak. I am too young!*” (Jer 1:6). Many other individuals were hesitant to take up the responsibility, like Amos 7:12-15; Isaiah 6:5-8 etc. Sometimes the fear comes because of our false perception that the leader ought to be perfect, but the motto of Pope Francis taken from the call of Matthew is delicious food for thought: “in showing mercy, God chose me”! Our leadership ability grows through mistakes.

Like E.D Giganti (one of the leaders of Catholic Health Association of the United States of America, 2004) we can understand leadership formation as developing leadership in individuals or how to generate leadership in the institution. Formation includes preparation for leadership. In others words, formation for leadership is a process of orienting a confrere for ministry, which involves exploration of giftedness; commitments to mission and values



in the institution. Formation leadership must always promote and sustain a congregation's commitment to its founding charism and values.

Leadership must promote continued meaning and understanding of consecrated life today, congregation's founding charism, values and commitment to prolong Christ's presence in the world. Such kind of leadership enables the members to access their glorious history to move into the future steeped in the spirit and ready to do even greater for the church in the world. Palmer further commented that leadership encourages you to become skilled at working with and motivating people, and to become more effective at managing the tasks successfully. This is done through identifying certain competencies that enhance effective leadership. The competencies for the mission orientation are vision, values, and innovations. A leader must inspire a clear vision of the future, this vision is not a personal vision but an institution's vision, to base our decisions on a strong sense of mission, and articulate directions for the entity's future.

2. LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

Leadership demands competency in serving others and this can be looked at on three levels:

1. Inclusion

It means treating others with respect and dignity, welcoming confreres who come with challenges; the ability to accept confreres' ideas and personalities. We must view conflicts as an opportunity to grow, welcome innovation even when it involves risk, and openly accept criticism and challenge from others. Pope Francis' extensive interview in *la Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit Roman Based Journal, September 19, 2013, commenting on what leadership should look like in the Catholic Church, said: "when I entrust something to someone, I totally trust the person"; we need to open the floor for discussion and we should avoid doing token consultation but real consultations.

Archbishop Martin of Dublin emphasized that leadership is never autocratic or selfish; it respects and calls forth the gifts and skills of everyone; it acknowledges initiative and creates a culture where a variety of gifts is nourished, developed, and celebrated. Leadership must always be seen and taken as a service, as a way of "walking with" others rather than a role, and by serving with others regardless of age, position, race, region. Such a leadership encourages inclusivity. The challenge of saying, these are very young, or old or from this or that region or tribe, so I cannot work with them, encourages exclusivism (elitism), and a divisive mindset in members. We ought to empower others become better leaders than yourself by creating favorable environment that promotes learning and delegating appropriately. One person does not achieve such a journey but each confrere can offer a service.

We must encourage participative management of our institution; look at how positions or specializations are represented within the entity. Look at the strongest skills of the members and strive to promote them.



2. Collaboration

One of the Montfortian pillars is Acting Together, encouraging teamwork- collaboration. A leader must be able to delegate responsibility within the group and communicate enthusiasm and confidence to encourage teamwork. Montfortians are collaborators, and the collaboration of each member ought to be taken into serious consideration. We are called to grow into the spirit of availability in order to collaborate well. When members collaborate, and commit towards a common goal, accompaniment becomes easier and transition does not become a worrisome issue. Archbishop Eamon further said, ‘Leadership has to be collaborative, collegial and permeates all aspects of the life and activity of the entity. Always be on the lookout for leadership everywhere; for young leaders among our members’.

3. Communication

If we are able to respect and accept each other and look at one another as collaborators, then we communicate this image to the rest of the members to motivate them to disseminate appropriate information at all levels of the entity. We must be committed, realistic and as our founder puts it, risk takers. We must effectively communicate ideas and plans, base their judgments on facts, and set clear and realistic goals. In the ‘Imitation of Christ’, the Teacher, describes the Catholic leader as “one who serves and one who shares leadership. As a leader, we must always be on the lookout for others who have a calling to leadership- learn to recognize the gifts in others, and call these gifts forth”. A leader must be able to communicate the congregation’s or entity’s vision and values; ability to articulate what is distinctively (Archbishop Eamon, 2015) Montfortian. If you are not clear about your institution’s ethos how will you be able to communicate it! We must lead towards a certain growth of the institution, not just be mere maintainers of resources and mission works or lead the institution to more difficulties and poverty.

3. THE REALITY OF FORMATION FOR LEADERSHIP IN ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

a. Leading towards a certain growth of the entity

The theme of leadership in the delegation fall under two of the orientations or acts of the General Anglophone Africa Delegation assembly of 2012: Governance and formation. This assembly drew a good strategic plan for the 6 years that followed:

At the level of formation, we took seriously the promotion of integral and holistic formation at all levels so as to witness to a true Montfortian identity and mission. We formed a commission for formation, which also organized sessions for each stage. We set a good orientation towards leadership while in initial formation and good accompaniment coupled with specialization for those in ongoing formation according to the needs of the entity. We allowed the candidates in formation houses get involved in the daily running of the houses.



At the level of governance, we set out to create a well-structured, united, focused, and proactive delegation, guided by the values of the gospel and our charism, where every member is empowered and inspired to fully participate, i.e., forming committees, the council meeting regularly, representation of confreres from all corners of the entity in the council, good dissemination of information through a newsletter “communion through communication,” regular visits of the superior to communities, each community send their community meeting’s minutes to the delegate’s office, above all creating a council that is united in heart and mind even in the presence of varied points of view of reality. As a delegation, we organize social gatherings every three months where members interact and recreate together; regular communication with local community superiors and their assistance to find out how they are going on with life; and we created media forums (whatsapp group forum) where members in the delegation exchange information about the joys and sorrows of life and communicate some emergency information and anniversaries. Central to all this is mentoring of young confreres for leadership positions. The young are mixed with the elder confreres to mentor them for future roles. There are elder confreres who were chosen to accompany those in temporal vows and under five years in priesthood. They organize a number of workshops for them where all gather and share important issues of their lives, spirituality, and ministry and sometimes just to give them an opportunity to mock one another their experiences in ministry. We encourage members to have spiritual directors who are made known to the superior delegate. The affairs of the delegation are made known to every confrere including financial situation so that we all move at the same pace and awareness. In doing so, every Confrere is able to see the direction that we are taking as an entity and this makes the whole management of the entity transparent and honest.

The committees namely: Administration, Formation, Finances, Mission and Evangelization have clear, stipulated vision and mission statements, objectives, actions to be taken, goals, success indicators, risks involved, inspirations, strategic interventions and time frame. It is the same with community and prayer life of our members, which guide our being together as montfortians. Such orientations have been of great benefit and help to many of our leaders, since their role was always to refer back to the Assembly Orientations. In so doing, what is promoted and put into consideration is the common goal of the delegation.

b. Periodic review of objectives and goals

The orientations were reviewed again in another General Assembly in September 2019. In this Assembly, members evaluated the set goals and objectives to identify the what we have achieved and what we haven’t achieved and thereafter map the way forward. The next review will be in 2025. Mostly the Delegation Assembly’s orientations follow the pattern of the General Chapter’s resolutions (2011 & 2017). What the delegation does is to make them applicable to our context. Such periodic reviews have guided the council members in their decision making processes and because of the objectives, goals and action to be taken the responsibility lies in how to find capable and rightful members to manage the work.



c. Clear strategic Intervention policies

The two assemblies have so far clarified areas of interest and intervention. With the proper analysis of the entity the duty of the administrators is to find the right personnel to address the challenges. When considering a confrere to take up the responsibility the leaders focus on the ability, right attitude, maturity, and depth of his focus and religiosity. When the gaps are noted in all the departments of the delegation, whether in terms of resource personnel, skills, finances etc. the council members discuss the actions to be taken with the available resources. When it demands for professional skills, the leaders identify the confrere to undergo training with the support of General Support Account (GSA). We have sometimes used the little resources that the delegation superior's office gets. The courses range from professional-long term to short-term workshops or training. So far, the delegation has a number of skilled confreres in formation, finances, communication, parish pastoral mission, and administration. Most of the trained confreres are already in various leadership positions managing different institutions with high level of competency and expertise.

d. Looking outside for opportunities

It is good to note that the leaders apart from depending on the support from the General Administration have engaged other entities and donor organizations in addressing some of the delegation's needs. We applied for scholarships to different organizations in the church, for instance, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), Cardinal Foley Foundation just to mention a few.

e. Skills that address the need of the entity

When sending confreres for studies, the delegation administration does it in view of the particular needs of the delegation. Once the confreres finish their studies, they are assigned to apostolates where they can exercise their expertise. However, where the leaders sense a change of attitude and ambition from a confrere, it is not automatic that he has to work in the field of his profession.

f. Trust and Support

The other consideration is assurance of teamwork and continued communication. Once the confrere is identified and consulted, we show full support in whatever responsibility he takes up. We encourage him and give the confrere necessary support and attention he may need to take up the challenge. It is not as if he is left on his own or giving him the work whilst we watch. We often have meetings evaluating how the confrere is doing in his mission and give necessary fraternal correction when needed.

When young confreres take up responsibilities, the council leaders are there to support, listen to challenges faced, and empower them further. The leaders are there for them, and create an environment where they are free to open up and seek support. The readiness to listen, open up, empower and communicate issues gives them confidence to take up the challenges. Listening to a number of young confreres, holding various positions and roles, they all speak with confidence and gratitude for the opportunity given. They are very



positive and feel empowered to manage the affairs. It has proven to be worthy and constructive mixing the young and senior confreres in different positions, which embellishes the common goal. Currently we have young confreres managing Luntha Television, big parishes, formation houses, centres etc. So far, their performance has been very good. Such a spirit has encouraged a number of the young confreres to develop leadership skills so much so that when other responsibilities are entrusted to them they feel not afraid but ready and prepared to take up the task.

g. Teamwork/Functioning Commissions

The institution of the commissions has brought good spirit of collaboration and great involvement of confreres. This has helped to look at issues with a firm foundation of opinions and way of looking at things. A number of confreres are very much appreciative that they feel involved in the affairs of the delegation when they are consulted for various issues. This has made many of our members to own the decisions taken and work for the common goal.

Issues are discussed at commission level then recommended to the council for further scrutiny so much so that when decisions are taken by the council it has been reached after a lot of consultation and dialogue. These commissions are given space and necessary resources to organize their meetings and discuss freely their issues and their recommendations are given necessary attention and support by the administration. The delegation finds this sharing of information and responsibility very constructive, inclusive, and collaborative enough. It is a good spirit of acting together and encouraging members to be available to take up various roles in the entity.

h. Ability to delegate

It is pleasing to note that there is good spirit of delegating members with different duties. The vastness of the delegation requires support from others in order to lead it well. For instance, in East Africa, there is one confrere, who has been assigned to handle the affairs of that part of the delegation and he reports to the office of the superior for intervention. The establishment of commissions has also helped the leader to reach out to a number of confreres' opinion in some matters of the entity.

4. CHALLENGES

It is true that the delegation has noticed some improvements as far as leadership is concerned however; we have faced a number of shadows in our effort to lead the entity.

Among the challenges faced are:

1. Insecurity about identity and significance, where the person tries to fall into external activity to prove that he is worthy. We let our identity become very much reliant on doing some external role that we get depressed when that position is taken away.



2. The thinking that the world is a battleground, hostile to human interests. This gospel of self-fulfilling, the fear of losing a fight compels the rest to live as if they are at war.
3. The fallacy of thinking “I am the Best”. It is a belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with me. The convictions that if anything decent is going to happen here, I am the one who must make it happen. A mature leader is one who grows in internal humility and gives up the internal attitude of being proud.
4. Denial of death. Sometimes we deny the fact that some things must die in due course. When we entertain such thinking, we compel people around us to keep resuscitating things that are no longer alive or relevant. Projects and programmes that should have been unplugged long ago are kept on life-support to accommodate the insecurities of a leader, who does not want anything to die on his or her watch.
5. Pushy characters-backbiters. These people come sweet-talking or backbiting but are after favors from you. They come dancing before you like the daughter of Herodias but will end up putting you in a fix like Herod.
6. Insubordination. There are times when confreres become stubborn, incorrigible, and arrogant just because they think they have everything and can do it on their own. Some even after being trained in a particular field/skill would want to choose for their own apostolate that corresponds to their taste. They no longer see the need of acting together, being available and prayer life.
7. Competition. The good spirit of empowering the young confreres can result also in gradual losing touch with the real mission and spirituality. For instance, it is good to train members in different fields or specializations in view of the gaps that have been observed and the intention is for the confreres to fill the gaps. However, when a confrere finishes he does not see that as his priority rather he has other ambitions. In addition, you will find that a number of confreres are competing for further studies and training, and if not allowed there is a change in attitudes and commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

One cannot deny the fact that leadership, though something we are familiar with is not easy! It has its glories when exercised with freedom and sense of responsibility. It has its challenges also when most of those we lead are dissatisfied with our way of leading the entity. As we have observed, we must try to practice inclusivity, collaboration, and good communication in our leadership style. Efforts must be exerted in seeing that we are grooming others, identifying their talents, and bring them forth on to the limelight. It is important that as leaders, we promote clear vision and mission where objectives, goals, and intervention policies are stipulated and making sure that members work towards implementing them. We should therefore not be the first ones to break the vision and mission of the entity but promoters, builders and energizers of what ought to be followed by the rest of the members.



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