



## **Year of Communion Among Ourselves**

### ***A Reflection on Leadership***

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#### **Let us be leaders of ourselves so as to serve better.**

Leadership in our Congregation is clearly seen as service. However, it brings with it many challenges, and probably for this reason, many Sisters really do not feel comfortable in this ministry. This year in which we deepen the “Communion Within the Congregation”, it is worth our while to reflect on the role of leadership, a role that requires a response to today’s challenges.

Before, when society was more stable, the role of the authority was clearly defined. It was considered normal to have ‘superiors’ who would decide what the Sisters were to obey unquestioningly. This was the right way to live the vow of obedience. But today, what kind of leadership do we want or need in order to be a meaningful presence in our rapidly changing world? What is the leadership model that will help us most to build, to construct, to deepen and to live communion among ourselves?

I think that in contemporary society we are called to be leaders of our own selves, that is, to fully assume personal responsibility for our lives, what we do, feel and think. The decisions that concern our personal life need to spring from our own interior, with responsibility and autonomy, without forgetting that we live in community and that we are co-responsible and interdependent, each one needing the other.

In this way, the experience of leadership refers not only to the Sisters who have been elected as community coordinators, but also to each one of us, whatever age we may be, the culture we come from or the service that we carry out.

Therefore, to be leader of ourselves is the first level in carrying out leadership and it requires us to take on the attitude and posture of an open conscience, value-centered, and in an ongoing process of learning. This makes us capable of looking at reality with a

critical eye. At the same time, we must nurture a deep spirituality in communion with God and with all of creation.

To be leaders of ourselves is to feel ourselves interconnected and with openness to all the being of creation in an attitude of respectful care. This is to discover ourselves part of humanity where each person is made in the image and likeness of God, a divine spark in the process of expansion, growth and perfecting, despite all the faults and limitations. This implies establishing horizontal relationships of equality, respect, friendship and solidarity, building fellowship. This is even more true for us as SSpS and as a consequence of our call to have chosen to live in community sharing faith and life.

As persons deeply connected with God, with nature, with ourselves, among ourselves and with all of humanity, we are transformed into holistic leaders, or central 'Holo' ('Holo' = totality), oriented toward the common good and toward communion. We recognize ourselves as part of a whole, united to our Creator by the bonds of love of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We can consider that leadership in the community also has a second level and in order to take it up, we at least need to be working at the first level, being conscious that we are beings in construction, struggling day by day with our weaknesses to allow the divine spark that inhabits us to manifest itself.

Even though we are more or less leaders of ourselves, we do not act in isolation, but we choose to live together and put ourselves at the service of the common mission. That is why we need Sisters who accept leadership in the community to help us strengthen our forces, working together in an organized and productive way.

The coordinator must be a facilitator in community life, helping each one to give her best and overcome her own difficulties, fostering an atmosphere of openness where each Sister can actively live, accepting the limits of her fellow Sisters, including the forgiveness that is renewed every day. In that environment we can experience the joy of coexistence and the sharing of all that we are and have. Therefore, the coordinator of the community is the one that, as time goes on, encourages everyone to grow in love, faith and service, living co-responsibility, in dialogue, discernment, interdependence and collaboration.

Leadership at a third level is found in the organization, at the regional, provincial or congregational level, as well as in our institutions: schools, hospitals, social works, etc. At this level, the role of leaders is to lead, coordinate, manage and direct people and assets with responsibility, while taking risks. In a complex society such as today's, there is an increasing demand to be professionally competent, in addition to perfecting the innate qualities. This requires knowledge of the current reality, with its challenges and opportunities, an overall vision, the ability to work as a team, integrating and valuing all the people involved, so as to create productive processes of change. It is up to the leader to strive towards the future, fostering the dreams of the people and of the institution; mobilizing their forces so that they become reality.

When the leadership team is integrated, attentive to the real situation of the institution and connected to the needs of the people they serve, in a process of continuous change

and improvement, then a climate of synergy, trust and enthusiasm is created in which people feel that it is worthwhile to use their strengths and give their best to achieve the proposed ideals.

When we live a style of participatory leadership in our provinces and regions, where all the Sisters have space and opportunity to express themselves and to contribute their opinions, ideas and talents, the responsibilities of the processes of change are assumed together and the sense of belonging grows, nurturing the sense of family and the joy of being together as we build our goals and face common difficulties.

At any level of leadership in which we find ourselves, we are all responsible for building community, making the precious treasure that we are shine and contribute with the best of each one, so that our community is happier and that happiness extends to humanity. Because according to the thought of Elizabeth Leseur, "a soul that rises, elevates the whole world".

**Reflection Questions:**

1. What does it mean for me to be a leader of myself? In what aspects do I need to grow to assume full responsibility over my own life?
2. What do co-responsibility and interdependence concretely mean in our community life?
3. What are the characteristics of a leadership team that really values itself? Why?