



Training Reflection on Leadership

November 2019

Topic 2

Being a Leader in AIC: A Commitment

Following in Saint Vincent's Footsteps



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Introduction to the Topic

After reflecting on the way of understanding and living the leadership mission as a service, taking inspiration from the Gospel (Reflection 1), this second reflection on the topic of leadership will explore the notion of leadership as a commitment that follows in Saint Vincent's footsteps.

We will first look at the notion of leadership in a context of service. We will see that there are different styles of leadership, which will lead to the question of efficient servant leadership.

We will finish with a reflection on the different qualities of a good leader in general, and more specifically, of a good Vincentian leader who is at the service of others.

1. Servant Leadership

Leadership is a dimension in all human groups that have objectives that they wish to achieve, regardless of the domain.

A simple definition of leadership could be a **person's ability** to:

- ✓ **Motivate** and **unite** a group of people,
- ✓ So that they can achieve a **common goal**,
- ✓ In an **environment of mutual trust**.



In the context of servant leadership, leaders put themselves **at the service of their team**. They guide it with a compelling vision, clear behavioral expectations and are authentic practitioners of the values proclaimed¹. They respect subsidiarity and **encourage each person to take social responsibility**². They seek to achieve the common objectives, recognizing and appreciating what each member of the team can offer.

¹ Greenleaf & Steven Covey, p. 10.

² Robert Greenleaf – AT&T "The Servant as Leader," 1970, p.16.



2. Efficient Servant Leadership

Several styles of leadership can be found in the literature on this topic. Some of these styles imply a certain way of leading the team. Here are four main styles with their advantages and disadvantages.

Style	In a few words	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Autocratic Authoritarian	'I' decide: <i>"Do what I say"</i>	Gets quick results in times of crisis; useful for managing a person who refuses to collaborate.	Low level of participation and autonomy in the team: can be demotivating, not appropriate in complex situations.
2. Paternalistic Persuasive Visionary	'I' decide, explaining my choices, I lead others towards a higher overall goal: <i>"Follow me"</i>	Charismatic; accessible, direct, strong link with the work; mobilization towards a clear objective; useful when changes are needed.	Difficult to apply if the vision is unrealistic. Lack of autonomy and responsibility in the team.
3. Participative, Collaborative	"We" decide together	The team comes first; use of collective intelligence; develops skills, cohesion, harmony, creativity.	The process is often long and slow; doesn't work in times of crisis to get quick results.
4. Delegation	"You" decide	Tasks are divided among the members according to their abilities; more responsibility generates a lot of motivation.	Cannot be used if the team members are not sufficiently competent and motivated.

There is no "best" style of leadership! Each type of task requires a different style of leadership. **For efficient leadership**, it is necessary to **adopt the leadership style** that is best **adapted to the situation and the context** of the work that needs to be done.

The "servant" leader relies mostly on the **participative style**, but can apply **others if necessary**. It is therefore necessary to adapt to people and to the context.

In order to be more efficient, it is also important to take every opportunity **develop the autonomy** of your collaborators. This is particularly important in your AIC groups where it is recommended to only occupy positions of responsibility for a **limited time** and **rotate** responsibilities among the members.

Our AIC groups therefore have members who have already had a role of responsibility, those who have one at the moment, and those who will have one in the future.

This system, which is beneficial both for the group as a whole and for each of its members, allows for learning, practicing and maintaining quality leadership while offering opportunities for **individual and collective development**. It also contributes to improving or maintaining the quality of the services that we offer to the people we support.

3. The Qualities of Good Vincentian Leadership

The **quality of the leadership**, more than any other factor, determines the **success** or the **failure** of an organization. Saint Vincent observed this when he founded the first Charity that was at the origin of our AIC groups today.

*“The poor suffer less from a lack of generosity than from a lack of **organization**.”*
Saint Vincent

A study³ reveals that what we appreciate most in leaders is that they are:

- 1) **Honest**: reliable; there is a link between their words and their actions ; they place importance on ethical values and norms;
- 2) **Planning ahead**: they are concerned about the future; they communicate a direction (medium/long-term vision, mission, objectives);
- 3) **Inspiring**: enthusiastic; energetic; positive; encouraging; sincerely passionate about the organization’s mission; are a charismatic example to others;
- 4) **Competent**: capable; efficient; have the skills needed to do the work; have relevant experience and an ability to work with others; have interpersonal skills and efficient networks.

There are of course other important qualities that a leader should have. Certain are more specific to Vincentian leaders, who are invited to follow the example of Jesus (see Reflection 1), making themselves “**servants**” of the team first, **supporting** and centered on the members.



Good Vincentian leaders therefore:

- ✓ Choose to **serve/guide**, **putting the team first** and not themselves;
- ✓ Encourage **fluid communication** and know how to **listen** and be there for each person;
- ✓ Know how to **delegate**, consult and involve all members, bringing out their strengths;
- ✓ Build a **fraternal and caring atmosphere** within the team;
- ✓ Are **consistent**: once a decision has been taken, they do not change their mind so the members know where to go/what to do;
- ✓ Are **humble**: if a decision turns out to be wrong, they are able to make amends quickly, explaining why to the team; they ask for help;
- ✓ **Recognize** the contributions of each member and **thank** them for the tasks they accomplish.
- ✓ Have their actions rooted in **prayer**.

³ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. 2007.

Good news: Leadership can be learned!

Although it's true that some people are born with greater natural gifts than others for guiding and leading, **leadership is a collection of skills** that can almost all be **learned and improved on**.

AIC's suggestions for reflection in groups

1

Leadership styles:

- a) What style(s) of leadership do you use?
- b) What type of leadership do you appreciate the most and why?

2

Qualities of a good Vincentian leader:

- a) What qualities of a good Vincentian leader do you think you have and/or need to acquire?
- b) What would you like to improve in your leadership? How could you do it?

Prayer

Leadership is hard to define.

Lord, let us be the ones to define it with justice.

Leadership is like hands full of water.

Lord, let us be the ones to share it with those who are thirsty.

Leadership is not about watching and correcting.

Lord, let us remember it is about listening and connecting.

Leadership is not about telling people what to do.

Lord, let us find out what people want.

Leadership is less about the love of power and more
about the power of love.

Lord, as we continue to undertake the role of leader,

let us be affirmed by the servant leadership
we witness in your son Jesus.

Let us walk in the path He has set
and let those who follow be guided by Him.

Let our greatest passion be compassion.

Our greatest strength, love.

Our greatest victory, the reward of peace.

In leading, never let us fail to follow,

In loving, never let us fail.

Amen