

## **FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL**

### **ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

**(Part 9)**

#### **LIVING OUT SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

I suppose none of us who are serving as leaders in CFC-FFL would disagree with the call to servant leadership. We readily agree and actually try to live out its high ideals. However, the problem might be in our not realizing certain aspects of leadership that actually keep us from fully embracing true servanthood.

I would now like to take up some of these.

When Jesus washed the feet of the apostles, he took the lowest place. The washing of feet was not even fit for the lowest slave, but that is what the Master did. To have to wash others' feet is to experience shame, humiliation and being looked down on (literally and figuratively).

Jesus was Master but he did the work of a slave, even lower. This is the context by which we must understand that we are leaders but more importantly servants.

#### Authority and power

Leaders do have authority and power. But it is authority and power to be able to serve. It is not authority and power to be able to dominate.

What to avoid:

Being dictatorial. We are pastors and not tyrants. We guide, advise, enlighten, encourage and also give direction. We are there to give care. We are there to love.

Being controlling. We do not have to have everything under our control. We in fact should delegate and practice the principle of subsidiarity. We trust in our subordinates.

Acting in any way that intimidates subordinates, thus preventing them from freely expressing their views and giving their inputs. Leaders must not only not act in an authoritarian way, but must actively encourage subordinates to give their inputs, even negative ones.

Demanding blind obedience. We are not a cult, and the freedom of our members to choose can never be taken from them. What we in fact promote is active submission, where they can freely (but respectfully) question anything and give their inputs.

Becoming impatient with people, to the point of just dictating on them. We must learn to work with and to walk with our people. It indeed is our privilege, and burden, to help form our brethren through loving pastoral care.

Acting unilaterally on decisions affecting the body. We must make it a habit to consult and seek the wisdom of others, especially of counselors and core teams, who are there precisely to give wise inputs.

Becoming functional. While we do have a function to perform, the basic reality is that we live in community, where loving relationships are at the core. Our relationships are primarily personal and fraternal, not merely functional.

### Looking good

For their able leadership, leaders ought to be respected, emulated, esteemed and even extolled. This is to encourage the brethren and help them trusting in their leaders, for the good of the body and the mission. However, looking good ought never be a factor in our handling our leadership. Jesus was demeaned and spat on. If circumstances cause us to suffer that same fate, then it is cause for great joy.

What to avoid:

Preventing subordinates from having access to a higher authority where the subordinates can express their disagreements with their leaders, so that we do not look bad to our superiors. We in fact should welcome such, so that if we are doing anything not right, then we can be corrected. We must humble ourselves. We should also trust in our superiors to be able to wisely handle any complaints against us.

Telling subordinates to take up matters with us first before going to a higher authority. While we do have a pastoral-hierarchical structure that brings order to our day-to-day community life, a subordinate must not be intimidated into not freely going to a higher authority if he/she feels the need to do so.

Becoming defensive or overly sensitive when criticized or questioned. Rather, welcome the criticism, which hopefully is constructive, and learn whatever needs to be learned. If there is no validity to the criticism, then simply explain and then leave the matter in the hands of the superior.

Becoming resentful when corrected by a superior due to the inputs of a subordinate. Rather, welcome every correction, wherever and however it comes about. Thank the one who gave the input that led to the correction.

Not fully disclosing problems when asked by one's superior. The superior is there to help us in improving our service.

Keeping quiet about problems when *not* asked by one's superior. Rather, we should volunteer "negative" information and eagerly solicit advice and inputs.

### Looking to one's own shortcomings

Yes, we are leaders. But we are leaders *in spite of* ourselves. We stand in the place of the Chief Shepherd Jesus, and so we will always fall short. But such realization is in fact a blessing, if only we will acknowledge our shortcomings and look to Jesus for grace and help. Such help is often given by God through our brethren.

What to avoid:

Thinking we have all the answers, and that seeking inputs from others especially subordinates would diminish us in their esteem.

Not humbly and actively seeking help from superiors or peers. We work as a team with other leaders. We compensate for weaknesses and enhance strengths. Not seeking help when needed is missing out on a great resource.

No longer being open to learn; being fixed on our ways, even if such have proven problematic at times.

Insisting on one's stated position or decision even in the face of clear indications that a change is desirable. This is sinful pride.

Not constantly being in a posture of dependence on and trust in the Lord. Such a posture is foolhardy.

### Trusting in God's working through subordinates

God raises leaders to lead, but God does not speak to His people only exclusively through His chosen leaders. Every member of community has a gift from the Holy Spirit, and every member can become a particular instrument of God to manifest His will and His direction for the community. Leaders must keenly desire to tap on to the mind of God through his subordinates.

What to avoid:

Looking on subordinates only as those under one's leadership, rather than as brethren who are equal in personal worth and dignity, and whom God can use to give wise inputs to their superiors.

Not being open to the work of the Spirit in subordinates with regards to matters of governance. Even though authority resides in a particular governor, it is always wise to seek counsel from others.

Fault finding; being focused more on the faults of subordinates. We are all works in progress. Leaders should in fact thank God that they are given the privilege to help form subordinates, and so patiently do so. God has every reason to be impatient with us, but that is not what we experience from Him.

Cold shoulder treatment to critics. We must always be patient, tolerant and forgiving, trying to win people over by our good works and loving care.

### Rejoicing in affliction

Jesus not only washed the feet of the apostles, but he went to the cross to suffer a humiliating and extremely painful death. The cross is the only way to glory. This is why Jesus tells his disciples, if they are to truly follow him, to deny themselves and take up their cross. As leaders, Jesus certainly wants us to travel the same path.

What to avoid:

Being depressed when things do not go our way. We must realize that God uses difficulties, challenges and crosses to keep us on the right track and to purify us. As such, they are blessings to be embraced.

Being discouraged and even wanting to give up one's service whenever we meet with opposition or correction from superiors. We should persevere and endure. We in fact should be encouraged that brethren care enough to correct or chastise us.

Looking on affliction as undesirable. Again, the cross is the way of true discipleship. Suffering is redemptive. As long as we act in righteousness, being misunderstood or being unjustly persecuted is to be considered as part of our continuing purification and growth to holiness.

Not rejoicing in affliction for the sake of righteousness.

Missing out on the reality that our enemy is Satan and not our brethren. Satan opposes God's work in and through us. At times he is able to use brethren to afflict us. But we should always know that he is the true enemy.

We have a long way to go in fully appreciating and living out servant leadership. But this can be the only way for us in CFC-FFL, because this is the way of Jesus.

Servant leadership is to be lived out, from the very top to the bottom, from the Servant General to the Household Servants. Servant leadership is the way to unity and peace in the body.

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