

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Sri Lanka, October 2016

Welcome everybody! It gives us great joy to meet you personally and as Teams who share with us the common service of Leadership in the Apostolic Group.

After the General Chapter we were all mobilised to respond to its calls. We are here to respond to one of them which concerns the type of leadership that we want to live in the Institute: *“Open to the newness that the world offers us, we recognise that our co-responsibility as members of the Holy Family requires us to make changes, so that our way of living leadership for mission may be integrated and prophetic”*¹; and in the Recommendations, the General Council is asked to encourage and explore ways of providing the formation necessary to live co-responsibility and leadership at local and international levels according to the orientations of the Corporate Commitment.²

For this reason, we, the General Leadership Team, decided to meet all the Leadership Teams of the Units so that we could have a formation experience together which would help us to provide a better service. Our plan is, not to meet all the groups at the same time, but to have smaller groups so that the meetings are more personalised and geared to greater inter-action, dialogue and the sharing of experiences. As far as possible, we prefer that all those taking part in these meetings are able to communicate in the same language.

The objectives that we propose for this meeting are:

- To strengthen collaboration among the Teams
- To learn from one another’s experience
- To deepen our understanding of living an integrated (collaborative), prophetic leadership for Mission.

When you hear those objectives, some of you may think that it is going to be “more of the same” or that they are threadbare clichés because we have used them so often. But we can ask ourselves: Are we actually living what we state so categorically? Have we put into practice new ways of working together and with others, of making decisions, of sharing responsibility, of collaborating with one another and with others? Have we translated words into action?

In the heart of each one of us and of our Teams is the desire to live the service we have accepted as well as possible. I am sure that we all want to live an authentic, prophetic and participative style of leadership... But, to a greater or lesser extent, we are marked by the “old models” that we have internalised because of our culture, family, Church, Religious Life and the *Holy Family*. It is a real challenge to let go of these and welcome the new that we are offered today and which the Chapter asks us [to adopt].

In order to bring about this “conversion” I suggest that we begin by looking at ourselves and our Teams. It is a question of being consistent. We cannot ask others to do what we are not able to do

¹ Corporate Commitment 2014, p. 4

² Recommendations. General Chapter 2014, p. 10

ourselves. The call is to be as consistent as possible with our own proposals and this internal consistency will be seen by others as a witness and an encouragement.

If we really help one another to make progress in this conversion process, the choices we make and the decisions we take for the Mission will make a difference in our Units, in the world and in ourselves. Our attachment to Jesus and his Mission requires us to live leadership differently, to live it as he did. He says to us, “*the leaders of the nations tyrannise them and the great use their power. Let it not be like that among you*”.³ Jesus’ style of leadership cannot be developed without times of silence and prayer/contemplation during which we listen to ourselves and to his voice which calls us to find him in the members of our Team and in so many people and situations that make up our daily lives.

It is true that we have made some progress but still “*there is a feeling of being half-way there without having achieved the changes that would satisfy either individuals or institutions [...] The difficulty we have in freedom, desires, opinions and individual consciences when trying to resolve various matters - ranging from daily life to the definition of mission and the re-reading the Charism – is mainly the result of putting new ways of doing things into practice while remaining within an old paradigm [...] even if we have consultation, dialogue and consensus, we still have a vertical mind-set which is incarnated in a hierarchical structure with asymmetrical relationships. People feel that they are recognised but the group continues to place authority in a person or a group with the resulting risks which range from over-burdening those in authority to a lack of co-responsibility among the others...*”⁴

The words and more especially the actions of Pope Francis invite us to a “*conversion*” in our way of living the service of leadership in the Church and in Religious Life. He insists repeatedly on the conversion of personal attitudes, life-styles and relationships while always keeping in mind the fact that we are at the service of the Gospel. For him, the conversion of personal attitudes is crucial because the most important thing is not what we do or how it is done but who is doing it. What are the deep motivations out of which we act?

The Corporate Commitment commits us in a special way, as Leadership Teams, to place ourselves, the Sisters, Communities and the Institute in “*a state of exodus*” in order to respond to the needs of the Mission today wherever we are, beyond national borders. “*In a globalised, interconnected world, we are called to live interdependence, strengthening the interrelatedness and sharing among the Units, with humanity and with Earth herself.*”⁵ When we reflect, discern and make decisions...do we take this global dimension into account?

Leadership in the *Holy Family* must promote and create communion. The Founder spoke of “*a unity of leadership*” among the different works and vocations of the Association in order to direct all efforts towards the same end. Included in our service are: challenging, listening dialogue, asking questions, looking for answers, facilitating processes of personal and corporate transformation, helping conflict resolution...in order to respond together to the needs of the Mission in today’s world. As Teams we are called to be able to feel together, to share a common vision which should not be imposed but should be sought in sisterly dialogue and listening. This generates cohesiveness, trust and collaboration.

³ Matt 20 :25-28

⁴ Monica C. UKASKI – Talk on “Popular Culture, Religious Life and Pastoral Practice”

⁵ Corporate Commitment p. 5

In order to respond to these three dimensions, we may need a transformation of personal and corporate consciousness because without transformation at the level of consciousness, nothing will change.

*“The advances that were made in the course of human history were possible because we knew how to move out of or escape from our private domains and individualism, to learn how to be together, to collaborate with others, to expand our consciousness and to share our wisdom. That is where new models of organization spring from.”*⁶

I can ask myself, “What level of consciousness do I (we) act out of?”

Let us hope that during these days we will help one another towards a conversion of mind-set and ways of acting. May we encourage one another to continue our journey of transformation on a personal level and within our Teams, communities, Units and the Institute.

Gospel leadership places its confidence in the Spirit which makes all things new.⁷ This faith attitude helps us to keep going even in the midst of uncertainty and when we are assailed by doubt and the fear of making mistakes; it does not let any of that prevent us from acting. We must take risks and keep on trying to practise a different style of leadership.

We are certainly not, and never will be, perfect leaders and we do not know nor do we have all the answers. In the General Rules and in his letters, the Founder, out of his wisdom and experience, gives us a whole series of qualities and attitudes for those who have the responsibility of leadership. But he concludes by saying, *“But if all these qualities cannot be found in the same person, it is at least essential and obligatory that she be truly spiritual, have a great love for the Society (Association), a sound judgment and the necessary education: then the help available to her will make up for what she is lacking”*.⁸

Let us ask that Spirit that we may experience his/her presence and transforming action in us and among us during these days.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna M." with a stylized flourish underneath.

⁶ “Teal Organizations”, José A. Cristo Rey García Paredes

⁷ See Rev 21: 5

⁸ See Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles, Selected Texts – Government nos. 323-356