

### C-3 Humility in Sustaining and Nourishing for the Journey

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O Glorious Father St. John of God, example of burning charity, obtain for us the same spirit of humility in hospitality to continue the healing Mission of Jesus to those who suffer. Let us empty ourselves of ourselves so that we could take on the mind of Christ who emptied himself, *by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (from Phil 2: 5-8).*

From your Constitutions we read, “Hospitality, which we have received as a gift, means that we must live our brotherhood with simplicity” (Const. 36b).

Simplicity and Humility are central in the life of any consecrated person; more so, in the life of a Hospitaller Brother, in the Hospitality as a core value in your life and mission.

“Humility is not so much thinking less of ourselves but rather thinking of ourselves less. (C.S. Lewis)

Viktor Frankl: Seeing the search for meaning outside of oneself is the pinnacle of maturity.

Erik Erickson’s being a “man for others” is a way of embracing the self-emptying of Jesus

John the Baptist: “I must decrease and He must increase.”

A mature person is one who shows a healthy balance between self-care and focus on Christ and on the people He calls them to serve.

St. Paul, conversant with weakness, could write, “I came to you in weakness and fear, and much trembling”, whose appearance was unimpressive and was plagued by illness: a Paul who could proclaim “I live not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me.” (Gals 2:20).

Brother Bernard Burke, then head of the English Province, was a man considered as an innovator. He was appreciated for his qualities as a leader, his readiness to accept responsibility, the courage of his convictions, his decisiveness and being unafraid of making mistakes, always open to change and, above all, his deep faith. Not everybody’s cup of tea, some thought him too stubborn...In his weakened physical state years later, the full flowering of the Christian life was seen in him, as an echo of Paul’s prayer in Ephesians “Glory be to him whose power working within us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20).

Christ within us identifies with all our struggles, pain, disappointments, still intent on leading us to be with him, in love and total trust.<sup>1</sup>

If humility is a mark of a Hospitaller Brother, the leader is doubly so. Yet, we can ask,

*Can Humility and Leadership go together?*

If we look at leadership in the corporate world, “we imagine someone who is strong, confident, an expert problem-solver, has all the answers, and someone who can lead the charge; someone who goes in and carries out all the injured soldiers from a battlefield.”<sup>2</sup> In another research, it is mentioned that, among different leadership traits, such as charisma, enthusiasm, and vision, humility is often overlooked.<sup>3</sup>

A humble leader is secure enough to recognize his weaknesses and to seek the input and talents of others. By being receptive to outside ideas and assistance, creative leaders open up new avenues for the community, his organization and for all stakeholders.

The two key points stressed here are: secure and recognize.

It takes *humility to recognize and admit one's weaknesses*. The admission doesn't need to take place in front of everyone, but at least to the person in the mirror. Without acknowledging our weak points, we cannot improve upon them and grow. Acknowledgement is step one. Taking pertinent action for bringing about change is a necessary second step. Denying our shortcomings even after receiving the same feedback repeatedly is a sign of ego and will restrict personal and professional development. So, we can conclude that humility equals growth.

*Being secure means that we are not afraid to seek help and guidance from others.*

Acknowledging others' opinions and ideas is not an indication of a lack of competence. Rather, it is a sign that one is not threatened by the valuable contribution of others. It creates an open and inspiring environment where creativity is welcomed and encouraged. This will lead to a more productive and positive atmosphere.

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<sup>1</sup> from Issue No 13 - January/February 2004 Charitable Trust Newsletter

<sup>2</sup> Forbes Magazine

<sup>3</sup> Gwen Moran. 6 Ways Humility Can Make You A Better Leader

The article continues: "What we teach about leadership in business schools simply does not prepare students for leading, because we ignore the importance of humility in business and beyond."

In his book, *The One Minute Manager*, Ken Blanchard states "People with humility do not think less of themselves; they just think about themselves less."

We move through the world with a paradigm in which we place ourselves in the center. We try and create an environment in which we can flourish and succeed. The problem with this model is that we have a tendency to become overly focused on ourselves while forgetting the needs of others around us. This can lead us into different levels of selfishness and isolation.

Putting others first isn't the first thing that comes to mind while living in a "every man for himself" culture. From a very early age, we are taught to compete and be the best we can be. Oftentimes, what we're not taught is to be thoughtful along the way and not neglect and crush others. Those who are able to dominate over others are glorified and as we grow, we try to emulate that behavior.

Since this attitude is woven into the very fabric of our society, when it comes to personal success, the trait of humility is almost all but forgotten. It isn't talked about or seen as relevant.

Although it's never too late to try and inculcate humility into our character, it needs to be instilled into us from an early age. Once we become hardened by the "me first" attitude, it will be very difficult to adopt.

Learning to develop a humble attitude makes us more human. Otherwise, we will walk around pretending we're infallible. This attitude will only distance us from others and ourselves. Gandhi, one of the greatest leaders in all of history, states:

"I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps."

We have often heard of Pope Francis' humble reference to himself as "a sinner". He accepts his reality as a saved sinner, in need of constant mercy of God.

Humility means being honest. When a leader can demonstrate honesty and look back on one's actions and behavior, it will provide a tremendous opportunity for personal development. Even though it goes against the grain of our society and the teachings that we've learned, the development of humility can help us cut through the wall of our ego, help us overcome most conflicts and obstacles, and help us create harmonious situations in our personal and professional lives.

Even monks and serious meditators will admit that developing humility is no easy task. However, if we hope to move in that direction, we can all take out five to 10 minutes a day to reflect on our behaviour and interactions and see how we can make some positive changes towards a more humble approach to life.

A study published in the Harvard Business Review <sup>4</sup> shows “that humility is one of four critical leadership factors for creating an environment where employees from different demographic backgrounds feel included. In a survey of more than 1500 workers from Australia, China, Germany, India, Mexico, and the U.S., it was found that when employees observed altruistic or selfless behaviour in their managers — a style characterized by 1) acts of humility, such as learning from criticism and admitting mistakes); 2) empowering followers to learn and develop; 3) acts of courage, such as taking personal risks for the greater good; and 4) holding employees responsible for results — they were more likely to report feeling included in their work teams. This was true for both women and men.

Employees who perceived altruistic behavior from their managers also reported being more innovative, suggesting new product ideas and ways of doing work better. Moreover, they were more likely to report engaging in team citizenship behavior, going beyond the call of duty, picking up the slack for an absent colleague — all indirect effects of feeling more included in their workgroups.

This research was also able to isolate the combination of two separate, underlying sentiments that make employees feel included: uniqueness *and* belongingness. Employees feel unique when they are recognized for the distinct talents and skills they bring to their teams; they feel they belong when they share important commonalities with co-workers.

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It’s tricky for leaders to get this balance right, and emphasizing uniqueness too much can diminish employees’ sense of belonging. However, research found that altruism is one of the key attributes of leaders who can coax this balance out of their employees, almost across the board.

Nonetheless, the study raises one common, perhaps universal implication: To promote inclusion and reap its rewards, leaders should embrace a selfless leadership style. Here are some concrete ways to get started based on both current research and an ongoing study of leadership development practices at one company, Rockwell Automation:

- **Share your mistakes as teachable moments.** When leaders showcase their own personal growth, they legitimize the growth and learning of others; by admitting to their own imperfections, they make it okay for others to be fallible, too. They also tend to connect with people who share their imperfections and foibles—they appear more

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<sup>4</sup> Follow Gadadhara Pandit Dasa on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/nycpandit](https://www.twitter.com/nycpandit)

“human,” more like “ordinary people”. Particularly in diverse workgroups, displays of humility may help to remind group members of their common humanity and shared objectives.

- **Engage in dialogue, not debates.** Another way to practice humility is to truly engage with different points of view. Too often leaders are focused on swaying others and “winning” arguments. When people debate in this way, they become so focused on proving the validity of their own views that they miss out on the opportunity to learn about *other* points of view. Inclusive leaders are humble enough to suspend their own agendas and beliefs. In so doing, they not only enhance their own learning but they validate the followers’ unique perspectives.
- 1. **Embrace uncertainty.** Ambiguity and uncertainty are part for the course of any human endeavour. So why not embrace them? When leaders humbly admit that they don’t have all the answers, they create space for others to step forward and offer solutions. They also engender a sense of interdependence. Followers understand that the best bet is to rely on each other to work through complex, ill-defined problems.
- **Role model being a “follower.”** Inclusive leaders empower *others* to lead. By reversing roles, leaders not only facilitate employees’ development but they model the act of taking a different perspective, something that is so critical to working effectively in diverse teams.

It was experienced that practicing humility in these ways has been essential to promoting an inclusive culture — a culture leaders see as critical to leveraging the diversity of global workforce. This is evident among leadership in international, intercultural congregations. The members of your Curia have surely a lot of stories to tell.

In Forbes Magazine, Professor Bradley Owens published a study in 2015<sup>5</sup> on what humility contributes to leadership. He established that practicing humility helps temper the more toxic aspects of narcissism, enabling these potentially productive aspects to enhance the leader’s effectiveness. He wrote: “I am not suggesting that entrepreneurs are narcissists; rather, the initial phase of entrepreneurship requires self-oriented tasks to be successful. In the second phase, an entrepreneur must be open to ideas, improve listening, support a strong team, be willing to make mistakes, delegate, and recognize team efforts to lead his employees and his company to company stability and greater success. Here’s how you can make that leap with confidence.

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<sup>5</sup> Forbes, Entrepreneurs. Humility: The Secret To Confident Leadership. [Ryan Westwood](#) , contributor

**1. Welcome new ideas.** You have been the “go-to” guy from the beginning. You have stood by your vision, and you have defended your business plan. Now that you have established a team, it’s time to utilize the talents of that team and invite new ideas to the management table.

**2. Listen.** “Listening is power, like that of smiling, is strong,” wrote Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. “When you listen well, you not only make an instant impression, but you also build a solid bridge for lasting connection. Who can resist being around a person who suspends his thoughts in order to value yours?”

**3. Support a strong team.** “Entrepreneurs have the dynamism to get something started,” wrote celebrity billionaire Richard Branson in his book, *Business Stripped Bare: Adventures of a Global Entrepreneur*. “They view the world differently from other people. They create opportunity that others don’t necessarily see and have the guts to give it a go. Yet an entrepreneur is not necessarily good at the nuts and bolts of running a business. I admit that this is not my true forte—and recognizing this weakness is essential for the entrepreneur.”<sup>6</sup> You’re the architect—but now you need to step back and support the team that you’ve hired to build your masterpiece.

**4. Be willing to make mistakes.** I would never promote reckless decisions, but I do recognize that any start-up has its share of risks. In an attempt to eliminate risks, many entrepreneurs study reports and analyze feedback and conduct meetings and host more meetings and—miss a golden opportunity. Don’t be so afraid to make a mistake that you are unable to act decisively. A mistake is merely a vehicle that carry you closer to a more thoroughly vetted idea and greater success.

**5. Delegate.** For many leaders, it is a challenge to delegate. But it’s a necessary component of building an effective organization. “The entrepreneur’s job is effectively to put themselves out of a job each time the new company is up and running,” wrote Branson. “Then they can step aside and free themselves up to be entrepreneurial in a different business. It is generally asking for trouble for an entrepreneur to stick around for too long, trying to cover both roles.”

**6. Recognize team efforts in success.** Michael Jordan had a legendary basketball career with the Chicago Bulls, but there were four other men on the court setting up the play for Jordan to make the shot. In much the same way, every successful entrepreneur has attained success by relying on the talents of a strong management team.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Branson, as cited

On the flip side, be careful to accept responsibility when a team effort fails. Carnegie states that the worst quality in leaders is “taking credit when things go well and dishing out blame when things go wrong.”

Practicing humility is not about erasing the self. It takes a strong sense of self to incorporate cooperative ideas, practice attentive listening, recognize personal limitations while encouraging strengths in others, recognize the lessons within mistakes, delegating, and recognizing team efforts in success. If you want to move beyond the start-up phase and develop a seasoned, stable, productive business, then practicing humility is the key to success.

I understand that there are a lot of demands on a leader day in and day out, but it is not an excuse to lose their humility. Here are some methods that would help leaders stay grounded:

- Practice Self-Reflection – This will enable you to step back and reflect on your activities for the week and see where you did not do well and identify room for improvement.
- Ensure You Have An Inner Circle – Your inner circle will be your confidant. They will be the people that guide you through the process.
- Prune Your Inner Circle – Make sure none of your inner circle are pushing you in the wrong direction and giving you the wrong information. If they do, let them go. Make sure you’re not surrounded by a “yes man”.
- Make Tough Decisions – Leaders always make tough decisions. Sometimes it means letting someone go because you don’t share the same vision.

As C.S. Lewis said: *“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.”*

It means focusing on others and practicing the servant leadership. True leaders always aim to serve rather than be served. Sometimes what causes us to stray from our path is our thinking that we need to act tough.

As Simon Sinek said: *“Great leaders don’t need to act tough. Their confidence and humility serve to underscore their toughness.”*

It is important to be yourself and not lose yourself. .

*What could help us stay grounded in humility? It sounds simple: Thinking less of yourself.*

Cultivating Humility.

Some research-based development program to cultivate more humility in leadership:<sup>7</sup>

- Know what you don't know. You may excel in many things, but as a leader, you must rely on those who have relevant qualifications and expertise. You need a degree of humility to see where your relative strengths are and where outside resources can help you get the right answers. Recognize the skills of other people and blend the right team around them. Know when to defer or delegate.
- Resist falling for your own publicity. Remember that reality is not flawless. Basking in the glory of success can be energizing, but it can be intoxicating and can blur our vision and impair judgment.
- Never underestimate the competition. You may be brilliant and audacious, but the world is full of hard-working, highly intelligent and creative individuals. Learn from others.
- Embrace and promote a spirit of service. Members are keen to figure out who are dedicated and who are able to promote growth in others. One cannot fake humility. Either you genuinely serve or you don't.
- Listen to weird ideas. The most imaginative and valuable ideas tend to come from the left field, or from those you least expect, from the "lowly and the unlearned."
- Be passionately curious. Constantly welcome and seek our knowledge. There are correlations between curiosity and many positive leadership attributes, including emotional and social intelligence. Albert Einstein said: "I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious."

Not everyone is born humble but humility can be cultivated. We can become more humble if we focus on appreciating the strengths of others, learning from them and admitting our mistakes. Be not afraid to speak of our own failures, weaknesses and blind spots. Doing so will make us more effective leaders.

Hospitality is not so much a task as it is an attitude, a way of living and sharing ourselves. As Robert McAfee Brown once said, hospitality is not a head trip but a foot trip.<sup>8</sup> Although it involves faithful performance of duties, hospitality naturally emerges from a grateful heart. More than responding to human need, it is first and foremost a response of love and gratitude to God's love, welcome and mercy. Hospitality will not occur in any significant way in our lives unless we regularly acknowledge that God expresses His power in constant mercy and compassion.

We do not become hospitable in an instant; we learn it in small increments of daily openness to the gifts and needs of all we encounter.

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<sup>7</sup> Michelle M. Smith, Humility is Key to Effective Leadership and High Performance

<sup>8</sup> Sister Gilmory Bauer, Power: a Capacity for Grace. Human Development V35. Issue 4, 2015



## Leadership considerations:

### Leadership according to the World:

We lead more by what we say than by listening;  
We lead more by doing than being;  
We lead more by making things happen than by allowing them to happen;  
We lead more by being in control than by surrender;  
We lead more by comparing than by accepting;  
We lead more from the head than from the heart;  
We lead more by external change than internal change;  
We lead according to how others react rather than by being rooted in who we are.

### Leadership according to the Gospel

We lead more by listening than by what we say;  
We lead more by being than by doing;  
We lead more by allowing things to happen than by making them happen;  
We lead more by surrendering than by being in control;  
We lead more by accepting than by comparing;  
We lead more from the heart than from the head;  
We lead more by internal change than by external change;  
We lead more by being rooted in who we are rather than according to others' reactions.

## Summary

To sum up, we turn to Sacred Scriptures to anchor our reflection on Humility.

**1Cor15, 9-11:** “For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however; but the grace of God that is with me. Therefore, whether it be or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

**Philippians 2:5-8** *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

**John 13:12f.** “When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

Our life of humble service is nourished by experiences of emptiness. The spirituality of self-giving, or permanent service, of unreserved outreach and welcome can sustain us in our ministry and journey of leadership.

“LISTEN MY SON”, so St John of God reminds his disciples. When people give up living for themselves they discover a mysterious design and plan for their life. Great effort is needed to readjust our lives to what God is offering us. Throughout life we have ‘new callings’ which deepen our initial calling and give it solidarity. But we have to respond...

Those who know that they are called by God to live in the manner of St. John of God, and respond to that call, must strive for a gradual interior transformation, a sense of being changed and consecrated.

Every missionary can experientially claim, that serving the poor and suffering necessarily changes and transforms them into humble and humbled missionary!

Let us love one another, for God is love...

With love as our way of life, may we live in God and God live in us.

Let us pray. Creator God, you gave our Father, John of God, a burning love for You and a compassionate heart for those in need. Grant that by doing good for others we may be counted among the saints in Your kingdom. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and Reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

### ***Reflection for Workshop***

- *Can I recall specific examples of being changed and stretched through the acts of hospitality, of thinking more of others?*
- *Effective leaders know how to inspire and motivate others in a shared vision or undertaking. How could I further develop my skill-set and commitment to such an approach to leadership? Do I know how to tap the hidden reservoir of power within others?*
- *Ultimately great leaders not only do grand gestures but their whole life becomes a “sign”, a message, a parable. Do I see traces of that process happening in me?*

Workshop: Fishbowl possible? APC volunteers with Curia. The fish that breaks out of the fish bowl, inviting others, “Are you looking to provide real leadership in risk?”