

Co-responsible Leadership



Letter of Presentation
of the Process



Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

an appetizer for many more meditations and sharing that you will surely do during your community meetings. The texts of the multiplication of the loaves are rich and inspiring. Each one will know how to listen to the Word that comes to her daily, as if it were heard for the first time. She will thus become a source of creativity and carrier of the message.

A single question to end this letter. How are we going to help one another in this search? Responding in an authentic and constructive way is already exercising coresponsible leadership. To all who, one day left their nets to follow Christ, Love is offered freely to fashion each dimension of our existence day after day and to live to the end having given all.

With our love and communion in the service of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

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All the modules have the same design. After an introduction on the aspect under consideration, we are invited to contemplate our lived experience. Following that, texts from the Bible, Church documents, congregational literature and articles from contemporary authors are provided for “enlightenment”. From these readings we will need to discern about the questions, ideas, lights, and challenges which arise so that at the end of each unit realistic and concrete means for personal and community conversion can be determined.

Here are the method and the concrete steps which we have adopted to motivate the work on coresponsible leadership. We hope that you receive it as a tool for moving forward and that you capture the spirit which underlies this task. It is hoped that this will provoke in us a more radical fidelity to our vocation-mission. That is why it should be lived very much in relation with the whole of the Project of the Congregation 2000-2006. What good is a reflection on the service of leadership if it is cut off from the “vision”? Let us follow Yahweh’s recommendation to Habakkuk: “*Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint*” (Hb 2,2-3). Is it necessary to underscore the essential link between all that is obedience and dialogue, and each priority? May our experience become a source of life for us and a sign of hope for those around us.

You will have noticed the title and logo chosen to illustrate the process: “Give... Receive... Distribute... Gather...”, four imperatives surrounding an image of the multiplication of the loaves. Four verbs which can be read in different order. The two fish are still intact, the bread is already multiplied and distributed. Lots of activity. Give? The two fish and the five loaves that you have received freely, give freely. To offer my gifts for the service of all... offer them to Jesus, in the hands of whom the loaves become limitless. Receive? In this event recounted six times in the New Testament, everyone receives: the crowd who didn’t even ask for something to eat; Jesus, who welcomes the gift, the disciples who had thought of their own solution; the child who must have marveled to see how much bread and fish came out of his little basket. And everyone receives from everyone. Distribute? What you receive, do not keep for yourself, serve it to the five thousand people sitting in groups and serve them all the bread and fish they want. Gather? Jesus asked them to gather up and bring to him all the fragments of bread and left over fish. Every gift is useful and necessary, nothing must be lost.

The brief commentary does not exhaust the subject, far from it. It is simply

The General Government
to
all the Sisters of the Congregation

Rome, February 2, 2002

Dear Sisters,

The letter we address to you today presents the ongoing formation process which we will follow together during the coming months. The theme: “Coresponsible leadership¹.” This expression is far from being foreign to us. It was used at the General Chapter 2000 to designate one of the specific resources to be developed in order to live the six priorities of the Project of the Congregation 2000-2006. In itself it already evokes a whole program.

Let us recall, then, the exact words of the chapter decision on this point:

- *The General Chapter calls all the Sisters to take responsibility in community to discern God’s will and to participate in decision-making concerning the life and Mission of the Congregation*
- *The General Chapter entrusts the General Government with:*
 - *the task of implementing a formative process involving all the Sisters to foster authentic obedience, dialogue, subsidiarity, and interdependence.*
 - *the task of elaborating orientations for coresponsible leadership in the Congregation, using our lived experience and the Constitutions as a starting point.*

There is a double objective here: to form ourselves in a style of coresponsible leadership and to define the spirituality and the style of ss.cc. leadership for our times.

The program is vast and the stakes high. In the world where religious life is changing radically, the expectations regarding leadership have also changed. A little everywhere one aspires for a rebirth of spiritual leadership where the heart, hope, and faith, compassion and courage are essential

Note for English language text. The term “Coresponsible leadership” here is copied from the General Chapter 2000 Decisions and will be used throughout the document. In French it reads: « Un service d’autorité coresponsable ».

elements. Today we need transformational leadership because we are in a time of refounding. At the heart of the Congregation we have felt this and it is no accident that the previous General Chapters also have insisted on discernment, leadership, interdependence and responsible obedience. We are not alone in this search. There is much current literature in the Church at the beginning of the 3rd millennium.

At all levels the service of leadership is for the life and the Mission of the community. It is a task confided to a few. Nevertheless, we all have a part of the responsibility for the life of the community. The responsibility is given to all, but we exercise it differently: as much by dialogue, by participation in reflections and discussions, by sharing tasks, as by seeking the will of God, by making decisions and implementing them. All this stimulates the enthusiasm with which we live the Mission and influences the way we organize ourselves to further the mission.

Recalling what the General Chapter 2000 asked, we repeat here one of our basic convictions. It is important that each and everyone of us participate in the process for the common good of our Institute which holds us in communion and leads us together to new horizons. Another essential conviction as we begin our journey is that the starting point for the reflection, sharing, and suggestions is our personal and community experience. The process concerns everyone. It is not a matter of telling others what they need to do or to be, but to discover what I myself must live and be. Life is more important than words, conversion goes beyond expressions. We have our congregational texts and especially the Constitutions and it will be indispensable to refer to certain articles, but it is also good for us to read them critically because we will have to revise them, especially the numbers which touch the service of authority (cf. General Government Plan, p. 10.) In any case it will be necessary to rewrite the texts referring to the service of authority so that they can be more life-giving. It should lead us to promote courageous, creative initiatives adapted to the most urgent needs of today. Thus not only making refounding possible, but also moving it along.

Several months ago our General Government began preparing the program presented here today. Our personal work, reflection on readings, conferences, and sharing with our “colleagues”, gradually intensified. For their side, the Brothers of the General Government are doing a similar work. Indeed, a significant moment was the meeting which the two General Governments had on the theme: “Service of Authority and Leadership in the Congregation”. This took place September 28 and 29, 2001. Starting with the chapter decisions

of each branch, we discussed the theological, spiritual, ecclesial, psycho-social foundations identified in our reflections. Then we shared our own “active” and “passive” experiences of authority. From there together we looked at what could enlighten the process for addressing the theme. We agreed that each government would determine its own program and that we would talk about these throughout the duration of the processes leaving the door wide open for concrete collaboration later. During January the Brothers defined and sent their program to their major communities. We are sending ours today.

The whole process will last until the General Chapter 2006. The first phase begins today and continues until the Council of the Congregation, i.e., September-October 2003. It is a formation experience based on elements of leadership which are distinct and at the same time closely linked. These will be separated into units which will be sent to you during the coming months:

February 2002	Characteristics of ss.cc. leadership
March 2002	Obedience
April-May 2002	Dialogue
July 2002	Subsidiarity and coresponsibility
October 2002	Interdependence

Although the calendar above indicates when the documents will be sent, we leave it to the Provinces/Region/PPC and Conferences to determine the rhythm of work. The following methodology is proposed:

- a) Each Sister personally receives the unit and studies the theme.
- b) There is sharing on the local community level.
- c) Around the middle of the process and at the end, the Provinces/Regions/PPC organize a sharing on a wider level -- in groups of communities or all together if possible.
- d) After each theme the Provincial/Regional/PPC Governments will make a synthesis of the echoes, difficulties, and questions encountered and send it to the General Government which will make them known by way of the communication network.
- e) Each Provincial/Regional/PPC Government makes a synthesis of the whole process. Provinces and Regions communicate this within their Conferences and PPC Africa and Asia share it with each other.
- f) These syntheses are sent to the General Government which will develop a work document before the Council of the Congregation.
- g) The Council of the Congregation will determine how to follow-up on and conclude the process.