

Leadership Today in the C.W.L. - Jan 31/13

When one asks about **leadership**, we hear often the phrase, I will be a helper, I can assist, but I do not want to be the leader, I do **not** want to be in charge. Let someone else take the responsibility, I will just help. Leadership is **not easy** today, but we must have leaders. We must have those who will help us organize and direct our actions and projects in order that there be a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment.

I know that when I was informed that the Holy Father had named me a bishop in the church, my first reaction was, **why me?** What do I have to offer? I am just a simple parish priest and I like doing what I am doing. Don't disturb me in my comfortableness and don't put me into a position I am not sure about - and might cause me stress. I am sure many people might think this way.

Leadership - it is needed in every organization and especially in the Catholic Women's League.

What does it take to be a Christian Leader today?

There are many books and essays on this topic, and you can read many reports, and web articles on leadership. I am proposing to share with you today, some ideas that I have, and that I wish to share with you as members of the Catholic Women's League. Some of these ideas are **not new**, they are just from **my perspective** as someone who works with you in this great organization for God and for Canada.

We all know the story of the **wedding feast of Cana**. Jesus changes the water into wine for the young married couple. I look at **Mary**, Jesus' mother, and notice something in her - which is important for leadership today. She approaches her son and says the couple have no more wine. She **boldly** approaches him and knows that he can do something for them. Even in his reply - 'it is not my time yet' - she knows that he will act and tells the servants to listen to him. What attribute did Mary demonstrate in this scene? I think it was **COURAGE**. She demonstrated some courage to approach her son - unafraid that in requesting something of him - he would reply.

A leader today needs a dose of **courage** in their hearts. Courage to be able to request assistance, to encourage others to share in the task or goal, to be **courageous** and approach those in authority for help or consideration and to be **persistent** for a reply. Courage. We are not talking about courage for battle or anything like this - but a courage in one's heart to 'not be afraid' to move forward. To consider new ideas and to **dream** about possibilities for the good of the league. I know that the leader also accepts responsibilities - but as Mary trusted and acted with courage towards her son - are **we** not just as able to act similarly with regards to one another in the league and for the sake of the league?

Mary knew the predicament of the young couple at the marriage, and she was **concerned** about them. They were probably friends of the family and that is why they were invited to the celebration. Are **we** not as concerned about the Catholic Women's League in a similar way? We want it to prosper and succeed. We want it to be a strong Catholic voice. We want it to be a witness of Gospel values to society.

Our **concern** prompts our **courage**, and our desire to do good for the league and in turn for God and Canada prompts us to **act courageously** and not to be afraid. God will give us the **grace** needed to accomplish our tasks - and we recognize that we are **not alone** in our leadership. Others are there to support us and to strengthen our resolve and to be there for us in our leadership and direction.

Along with COURAGE - is the desire for COOPERATION. Cooperating with one another, as a **team**, in harmony and in mutual respect is a **key** in making things work well. We all have ideas, we all think things should be done in a certain way - but we do not always have the same ideas. We need to be **open to others** - to respect other **opinions** and to work in **consensus**, that whatever direction is chosen, we will be supportive, even though it might not have been my first choice.

I deal with this daily in working with my priests, deacons and others. We share ideas, we discuss and deliberate - and in our conclusion we decide what is **best for all** - and are supportive of that direction. The League must always work and continue to work in this way. Courage and cooperation and concern, the '**C**' of **CWL**.

The second aspect of leadership is a **WILLINGNESS** to serve. No one can be **forced** into a position, especially one of leadership, and then in their state of regretfulness, they attempt to guide others. Once the task or position has been accepted, then we '**run with the ball**', so to speak. We commit ourselves to the task and responsibility, knowing full well that it entails some hardship and struggle, but that this is a part of the **job**. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not always happy, I am sure, of the directions her s

Son was taking, however, we know that as **a woman of faith**, she trusted Him and gave Him her support. Even to accompanying him to the cross. I remember when I was named a bishop - I asked to spend time in the chapel - to reflect on this call and appointment - and I resolved that if the Pope appointed me - then God must have a place for me in this work, - and the grace of God would sustain me in accepting the responsibilities.

A leader, in their **willingness**, will be a **strong example** to others and a guide who can be trusted, since they lead, not begrudgingly but with **hope** and a **positive** outlook. We have too many **negative thoughts** in our world today. All around us is negativity and remorse and doubt. A leader must **inspire** by their willingness - a sense of **hope** and **movement** towards a positive end. A leader inspires by this willingness and acceptance.

I know again, when I was named a bishop, I wondered what I could offer the Church. What gifts did I have, and what responsibilities will this entail? I prayed about it, and came to the conclusion, that if the Lord set this in motion, then there must be some meaning to it, and I must accept it with humility and give it my best shot! I must be willing and **WELCOMING** to the leadership role. The willingness or welcoming is the **'W' in CWL**.

The third area of **virtue** that I believe a person in leadership in the CWL must have is **LOVE** and **LAUGHTER**. You may snicker when you hear this, but a leader must have a sense of **humour**, be able to laugh at situations and issues and even though a leader does take things seriously, there must be some time **enjoyment** in the task. Enjoyment, laughter and some fun, help the task of leadership to be **wholesome** and **healthy**.

Laughter is food or nourishment for the soul. It helps us to accept our limitations, to be more honest and sincere with one another, and to enjoy life and the challenges it brings us without becoming overwhelmed, too anxious, or **too stressed out**. Laughter can be **healing** and can quell disagreements and can once again bring people together in stressful situations. I guess that is why - the after meeting gatherings in the President's suite for a nightcap are so important to the success of a meeting!

I couple laughter with LOVE. Now I refer here to **love of the league**, and love of one another. Again, I believe that Mary, the example of loving and caring, teaches us this virtue. Love of the league, which we all have, is a desire to see the advancement and growth of this organization, which is so important for the life of the Church. Our love helps us recognize that our work in the league **stretches beyond** our own Council or group, and really affects the **entire life** of the league and the Church. Our love for the league, is a love for Christ and His Church.

To love God is to love your neighbour, as Jesus pointed out. Our neighbour is **every** member of the league, and every member of our **parish**. The love that Jesus calls us to share is not just a **filial** love - as brothers and sisters, but a '**agape**' love with means sharing closely and strongly with each other in the name of Jesus. That is why we 'communicate' together at Mass. Our **communion** in the Lord is our communion with each other. This aspect of communion is important for an leader to recognize.

The love of our sisters in the league, must be visible in our **actions**. In our support and cooperation with one another, and in our **interaction**. A

good leader, by their example, will help bring this out in the members of the league. A good leader will help to build communion and cooperation by their love of the league and their willingness to do what they need to do - not for personal gain or ambition but for the league. This love and laughter is the **'L' of CWL for me.**

Now you might say, **who** has these qualities to be a leader as expressed? I believe that **we all do** to a certain extent in one way or another. We all can be **courageous** like Mary and be open to the grace of God to help us. We all can be **willing** to take on a task and act in a positive way as we cooperate together and support one another in the gifts we share - which include the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We all can share in **laughter** and good fun and also demonstrate our **love** in showing our concern and assistance to one another. We are ALL blessed with these gifts. The challenge to us is, are we **willing** to USE them as the Lord requires?

I refer back again to Pope John Paul II (who was also questioning whether he had the qualities to lead the church once he was elected as Pope) - in his document 'Novo Millennium Ineunte' - the **blueprint** for this century. He stressed the **giftedness** of each person. He called to mind how are gifts from God **vary** for each person, and he reiterated how these gifts are shared for the **good of all**. Your gifts compliment my gifts and visa versa. **No one** has all the gifts, they are distributed according to each's need and ability. And the one thing that the Pope emphasized - was our need to not seek competition, but to work **cooperatively and supportively** rejoicing in each others gifts and talents for the good of all. I would like to end with **two quotes** from the Pope's document for our reflection.

42. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the "new commandment" which he gave us: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34).

43. *To make the Church the home and the school of **communion**: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.*

*But what does this **mean** in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to promote a **spirituality of communion**, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the **mystery** of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose **light** we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an **ability** to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me". This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine **friendship**. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is **positive** in others, to welcome it and prize it as a **gift** from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.*

