

**A Paper on “Servant Leadership in the Church Traditions”**  
(SMX Convention Center, 14 June 2013)

**Session Objective/ Outcome:**

- That participants may acquire the basic concepts of servant leadership in the framework of the various traditions of the Church
- That participants may appreciate and understand servant leadership in the various historical movements of Christianity
- That participants may apply these traditions in varying degrees in their life and ministry.

**Outline:**

- I. Servant Leadership: a working description
- II. The Divine Model of Servant Leadership – Jesus the Christ
- III. A Working Framework – Streams of Living Water of Richard J. Foster
  - A. The Contemplative Tradition – Prayer – Filled Life
  - B. The Life of Holiness – Virtuous Life
  - C. The Charismatic Life – Spirit Empowered Life
  - D. The Life of Social Justice – Compassionate Life
  - E. The Evangelical Life – Word Centered Life
  - F. The Incarnational Life – Sacramental Life
- IV. Conclusion

The Quilt of Servant Leadership draws its beauty from the variety of stories of saints, mystics, sages, prophets and ministers. It is the way for forming future leaders for country and faith – based communities/ churches.

## **Servant Leadership**

“Give us priests – holy priests! Priests who give Jesus, only Jesus, always Jesus.” Words from Blessed Teresa of Calcutta uttered during the First International Retreat of Priests in Rome. These are memorable words from Blessed Teresa. They challenged the priests in the presence of Blessed John Paul II to be HOLY. Holiness, after all, is a duty of every Christian. “Be perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5)

To be servant leaders today is to relentlessly pursue holiness. Big words! Holiness is seeking God. It is allowing God to enter your life – your business, your career, your family and yes, your ministry.

The identifying mark of leadership is service. The way of holiness is service. Service transforms the leader. Service defines the identity of the leader. Service is the process by which the leader allows himself/ herself to be “disempowered”! yes, to let go of powers and “entitlements”.

The servant – leader is one who has captured a vision drawn from the collective dreams and aspirations of people, with a passion to give oneself even at the cost of one’s life for others. The servant leader is called from the community in order to serve the community through leadership. “It is the Christian approach to organizational tasks, interpersonal relationships, formation and community building.” (Catholic Church Management, 5)

**The paper is divided into: Jesus Christ – the servant leader par excellence, the six traditions that flow out of the story of Jesus, a concrete reflection of the tradition in the lives of heroes and heroines and a reflection on servant leadership.**

### **Jesus Christ – the servant leader par excellence**

The “New Evangelization” challenges the church of the new millennium to trace the footsteps of the Lord in order to engage itself on pathways of renewal and revitalization. New methods, new expressions toward new fervor would only find meaning when each of us discovers the “beauty and perennial newness of the encounter with Christ.” (Synod 3)

Our traditions flow from and reach their summit in the person of Jesus the Christ. These traditions of the Christian community have continued to flow these past centuries due to the power of the encounter with Jesus.

The mystery of the “fleshed God” Jesus Christ is the paradigm of the traditions of servant leadership. In his life and ministry and above all, in his Paschal Mystery, we discover a variety of traditions that Christians thru centuries have practiced and exemplified.

Jesus is the paradigm of servant leadership because in a variety of traditions, he is the pattern of how best to serve and lead people.

### **Streams of Living Water- the Six Traditions**

Richard J. Foster in his book, **Streams of Living Water** identifies the great traditions of Christian faith that take their source from the Jesus whom he calls the Divine Paradigm.

Foster says: Today a mighty river of the Spirit is bursting forth from the hearts of women and men, boys and girls. It is a deep river of divine intimacy, a powerful river of holy living, a dancing river of jubilation in the Spirit, and a broad river of unconditional love for all peoples. As Jesus says, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

The Contemplative Tradition, or the prayer-filled life; The Holiness Tradition, or the virtuous life; The Charismatic Tradition, or the Spirit-empowered life; The Social Justice Tradition, or the compassionate life; The Evangelical Tradition, or the Word-centered life; The Incarnational Tradition, or the sacramental life.

### **CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION**

It is "a life of loving attention to God and growing union with God". This is fundamental to our following Jesus. It is a call to go back to what is essential in our Christian Life that is, "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind..." (Lk. 10:26-27)

Pope John Paul II summons young people "not to be afraid to become contemplative". Contemplative, not in the sense of a particular vocation, to live behind the grilles but, "a friendly and loving exchange with a God whom we know loves us."

This contemplative life is characterized by the following:

1. "Beautiful of soul" - the prayer-filled life
2. Love - "a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God" in the words of St. John of the Cross
3. Peace — a quiet rest, not due to the absence of conflict or worry but rather because of a Presence
4. Delight — "the sweet and delightful life of love with God...that delightful and wondrous vision; an exquisite delight mingled with a painful yearning"
5. Emptiness — a living thirst, an urgent longing of love
6. Fire — the purifying fire of God's love consuming sins and bringing forth love
7. Wisdom — a "knowing and inflowing of God Himself," which turns Prayer

into a deepening of self-communication of the Trinity, a self-communication which enables one to listen in and even participate in this Trinitarian life

8. Transformation — the identification of the entire personality into the likeness of Christ Himself, taking more and more His ways, feelings, judgments, words and actions.

Let me cite to you St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, aside from St. Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face.

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity was born in France on July 18, 1880 of a prayerful and middle class family. A young girl who distinguished herself in piano, left her family and entered Carmel at the age of 21. She felt the calling to enter Carmel at the age of 14. She said:

*"One day after receiving Communion, the word Carmel was pronounced in the depth of my soul. From then on, I thought only of hiding myself behind its grilles. I have never thought of anything but Carmel, and I will gladly make the sacrifice of my piano...I feel I am made for the interior life...the only sacrifice is to leave my mother and sister...when shall I have the happiness of being in Carmel? But Mama is not willing; I will wait until my mother is resigned...the attraction of Carmel is a force that nothing can hinder, even the love that I bear for my mother."*

After her vows on January 11, 1903, she contracted the dreaded Addison's disease. Her last recorded statement on Nov. 9, 1906 was,

"I am going to light, to love, to life."

### **A Reflection:**

Servant Leadership calls us to gaze on the beauty of Jesus in prayer and solitude. The servant leader spends time in prayer – soaks himself in prayer. For in the end he/she recognizes his strength only in prayer. What the world needs today are mystics – men and women who know Jesus – who have encountered him and who constantly gaze on him in prayer, silence and solitude.

### **HOLINESS TRADITION**

Virtuous tradition means:

"The ability to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. It is the ability to respond appropriately to the demands of life. It may cost a person his or her life. It is sustained attention to the heart, the source of all action. It is a

world affirming, it is found in the middle of ordinary life. It is striving to enter into the life of holiness through the discipline of spirit, mind and body in right living”.

The virtuous life underlines the importance of cooperating with the grace of the Lord in our lives through the disciplines of spiritual life. These disciplines are: prayer, meditation, study, fasting, solitude, service, worship, celebration and much more. They aim to make us grow in holiness, in virtue, so as to take on the challenges of life. This is what we Filipinos say: NASA DIYOS ANG AWA, NASA TAO **ANG GAWA!**

Examples of virtuous life are St. Maria Goretti and Blessed Laura Vicuña – martyrs of purity.

But for us tasked to write a new martyrology, let me introduced Saint Pedro Calungsod of the Visayas.

“Little is known of Pedro Calungsod’s boyhood. At that time, Jesuit faith. The brighter and more talented boys were then employed as catechists, altar servers, and companions of the priests who went around the countryside instructing the local people, bringing them to church services, helping them to become devoted Catholics. At the age of 13 or 14, young Pedro who was once of those mission helpers, was brought from Cebu to Manila and then to Mexico, and from port-city of Acapulco to the Mariana Island. The Jesuits made Agaña in Guam their mission center.

Fr. Diego Luis San Vitores, one of the really outstanding missionaries of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries headed the mission to the Marianas. Conversions were plentiful – in the thousands – from the beginning, but was met with growing oppositions from some local chieftains and some “witch-doctors”.

A Chinese influential incited the natives to turn against the Spanish priests while a fierce local chieftain, named Hurao, led an armed rebellion. Although the Spaniards overcame the insurrection and restored peace, not all had been won over to acceptance of the Christian faith. Killings of some of the lay missionary associates continued and on 1672, local chieftain Matapang who had fallen away from faith, joined by a non-Christian native, Hurao attacked Fr. San Vitores and his companion catechist, Pedro Calungsod. The young Filipino could have tried to save his own life by fleeing the scene, but chose instead to defend and shield the 44 year old missionary. They cut down young Pedro with a spear, and then slew Fr. San Vitores, stripping their bodies and tying them to a heavy stone, before dropping them in the deep waters.

On March 5, 2000 he was beatified in Vatican, Rome and was proclaimed

patron of the Filipino Youth. And Benedict XVI canonized him on 21 October 2012.

### **A Reflection:**

Servant leadership calls us to live a virtuous life. Virtue is a good operative habit. There are 8 virtues: Faith, Hope and love as well as Justice, Temperance, Prudence and Fortitude. While love is the virtue of virtues and the supreme virtue, the paper proposes the foundation of virtues – a fruit of love. This is humility. Humility is the ground of all virtues. A servant leader who loves his people is humble and self – effacing.

### **CHARISMATIC TRADITION**

The tradition focuses upon “the empowering charisms or gifts of the spirit and the nurturing fruit of the Spirit. It is a life immersed in, empowering by and under the direction of the Spirit”.

Some marks of the charismatic tradition is the joy experienced by those touched by the Spirit. One can cite the joy-filled life of St. Francis of Assisi who “spoke with such great fervor of spirit, that not being able to contain himself for joy...He moved his feet as though he were dancing.”

In the Protestant tradition, one may cite William Joseph Seymour, the founder of the worldwide Pentecostal explosion. Florence Crawford, a follower cites this experience of the Pentecostal movement:

“They sang a little, but that did not seem to touch my heart. They went down in prayer but that didn’t move me at all...Finally, a big colored man got up on his feet. He said, “Halleluiah.” It just went through my soul. He waited a minute, and again he said, “Halleluiah” I thought, “God, I have heard, the voice from Heaven. I have heard it at last...He has the thing my heart is reaching out after.

I forgot everything else, for I heard the voice of the great Shepherd of the sheep...The one thing I wondered was, how could I get it? How could I receive that wonderful blessing on my soul that I had hungered for so long, and that this man had?...Oh, the hunger that God planted in my soul! It didn’t matter what my people would say — my friends and all — but only, could I get it?”

The charismatic tradition underlines the gifts of the Spirit which are to be cultivated and used for the building up of the Church and the greatest gift is not the gift of tongues, or prophecy but gift love. For divine love is central in the effective functioning of spiritual gifts. In the charismatic tradition, respect for each other’s gifts, maintaining unity in diversity and responsibility for the sake of others are ingredients of proper use of the gifts of the spirit.

Yes, gifts are never to be clutched. They must always be shared! Are there not enough of us in our country, young men and women who have been touched so immensely by the charismatic movement. The work of the trans-parochial communities and the parish charismatic movements are the best examples of this living tradition. Speaking in tongues, interpretation of the tongues, service of community healing of brokenness and woundedness through forgiveness and reconciliation are but a few of the many gifts given by the Spirit. But greatest of these is the building the church in love. (1 Cor 12)

### **A Reflection:**

Servant leadership calls us to be open to the movement of the Spirit in our communities. This calls for the gifts of discernment and teaching, organizing and empowering on servant leaders. In the end, all charismatic gifts are at the service of the building of the church. And this church is at the service of the mission which is evangelization.

### **JUSTICE TRADITION**

William Penn said: "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it".

The social justice stream of Christian life and faith focuses upon justice and shalom in all human relationships and social structures. This compassionate way of living is not only affective but effective, meaning it seeks to proclaim a message of liberation, eloquently proclaimed by the Synod of Bishops of 1971: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of society fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the proclamation of the gospel."

The social justice tradition embraces three great themes which for us, lend themselves to celebration of the Great Jubilee 2000: "misphat, hesed, and shalom"

Misphat means justice. In the biblical word, it is fidelity to the covenant. "It is used so constantly in conjunction to the Hebrew word of righteousness. It involves bringing about equitable, harmonious relationships between people. When Solomon prayed for the wisdom to govern people justly, God responded, 'You...have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right'." (1Kings 3:11)

This is the justice expressed in the Hebrew practice of the Jubilee Year: "to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house" (Is. 58:6-7).

Hesed, means "loving kindness and steadfast love". This is what the Lord requires of his people. Through Hosea we hear: "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hos. 6:6). This is a total world view of one's quality relationship with all of creation graciousness, courtesy, respect for the integrity of creation, stewardship of land and livestock.

Shalom, conveys the idea of harmonious unity, of peace. PCP II calls this "KAAYUSAN NG BUHAY!" MAAYOS NA SAMAHAN, MAAYOS NA KALUSUGAN. Shalom embodies the vision of a harmonious all-inclusive community of loving persons. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2:2-4)

I gaze on modern Filipino youth whose lives have touched others through their acts of compassionate service: Ritchie Fernando, Sjid Bulig, Robin Garcia, Rhona Cahilum and Tonton Diaz to name a few.

Sajid Bulig is the hero of the Bocaue Tragedy on 2 July 1993. A 13-year old boy who repeatedly swam back and forth and saved six lives. On his 7th attempt, he was hit by a slab from the pagoda. He did not have to return to the deep, but he was moved by the cries and supplications of those drowning in waters. (Philippine Star, July 5, 1993)

Robin Garcia is the hero of the Cabanatuan earthquake tragedy. A 20-year old moved with compassion who assured his classmates that he would save them. "GAGAPANG AKO PATUNGO SA LABAS. MAGHINTAY KAYO. BABALIK AKO UPANG MAILIGTAS KAYONG LAHAT...TAPANG LANG...MGA KASAMA". He found his way back and saved five companions but he still wanted to save more lives. As he re-entered he was met with an after shock and smitten by a Concrete slab.

Rhona Cahilum of Negros Occidental was a 9 yr. old girl who saved her three siblings from burning out. (Philippine Star, August 26, 1996).

Tonton followed the example of Rhona by saving twins (who were not his relatives) from their burning house. He carried each 6 mo.-old in each arm until he reached the door where the mother could reach them. By the time Tonton could be reached, Tonton's hair and jacket were already in flames. He suffered third degree burns on the head, back, hands and left leg. It is inspiring to know that heroism is alive and among the children. I am reminded of a Professor who said: Young people have the instinct of divinity. (Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 23, 1997)

Ritchie Fernando, SJ, was born on February 29, 1970. He studied in a Dominican School and in Claret School. Entered in the Society of Jesus after his college at the Ateneo de Manila University. His dream was to serve at the foreign missions. This was fulfilled when he was assigned at the Technical School for the handicapped at the Banteay Prieb (Center of the Dove), 25 kms from Phnom Penh. The school is managed by the Jesuit to the students and peers, he said:

“If I die, I hope the people will remember not how great I am, nor how strong, nor how talented, but that I have served, I have proclaimed the truth, that I gave witness to what is true, that I am sincere in my speech and in my words. In short, that I have loved and followed Christ.”

On October 17, 1996 he died in Phnom Penh from a grenade blast in an attempt to restrain a troubled student from throwing a grenade to a class of handicapped Cambodian students. (Diary of Richard Michael “Ritchie” R. Fernando, SJ)

### **A Reflection:**

Servant leadership calls us to bend backwards and practice the church’s love of preference for the poor. To share our resources with the needy and to live integrity to the full are ways to live justice. Moreover, it is good for servant leaders in the justice tradition to re – discover the paramount role of forming social conscience in the church and nation.

### **EVANGELICAL TRADITION**

The evangelical tradition comprises three rat themes: the faithful proclamation of the gospel, the centrality of Scriptures as a faithful repository of the Gospel and the confessional witness of the early Christian community as a faithful interpretation of the gospel.

The evangelical tradition is the prophetic tradition of the Church lived in various ways: in education, catechesis, kerygma, didache. It is found whenever and wherever, the Church is found teaching and living what she teaches. When schools provide quality, relevant and Christian education aimed towards creating a culture of excellence, then they commit themselves to the evangelical tradition. When the Church strengthens its catechetical instruction in the public schools and carries the message of the gospel in the formation of the BEC’s, then it manifests its commitment to the sharing of the Gospel to all peoples.

A young catechist exhibits for us this evangelical tradition:

Nestor Dacara of the Archdiocese of Caceres. Born in 1951, studied at the

Mother of Life Catechetical Center. Upon graduation as a catechist, Nestor said: "I am now a catechist and I hope I shall always be a catechist. Catechists are very much needed by the Church especially during these times when the drift to materialism is very evident in our society. On August 15, 1987, Nestor was killed by armed men believed to be members of NPA in a remote barrio in Camarines Sur. At the time when he was picked up, he was starting a project of putting up a deep well for potable water for the residents of Barrio Pagoring Nuevo, Libmanan. Nestor was well aware of the risks he was talking in pushing through with the project. He has been warned by fellow catechists about the dangers. His answer: "KUNG AKO AY MATATAKOT, SINO PA ANG MAGIGING LORENZO RUIZ?" In 1987, writing his reflection of what a MOLian catechist should be, wrote:

"In Jesus, there is nothing to fear — sufferings, tribulation or even death. This is my vision: to proclaim Jesus in our diocese, so that one day we will truly be 'one bread, one body, one people'".

He was abducted on August 13, 1987, tortured for two days and shot on the 15th. His body was found on October 23, 1987 placed inside a carton box.

### **A Reflection:**

Servant leadership calls us to know the faith, to guard the faith, to promote the faith and to live the faith. The servant leader is faithful to the single deposit of the faith – the Word of God. And this Word is found in Scriptures and Tradition. And the best expression of the tradition of the church is the lives of saints and martyrs.

### **INCARNATIONAL TRADITION**

Foster states that the Incarnational tradition focuses upon:

"Making present and visible the realm of the invisible Spirit. This sacramental way of living addresses the crying need to experience God as truly manifest and notoriously active in daily life".

The best arena of living in the incarnational life are our family, our work and society as a whole. To live Jesus in the home, is a challenge for every family; to discover God in our work, in our vocation, in the decisions made in the board room of the corporation in Makati, or the simple laborer who does his duty from 8 am to 6 pm,; to live Jesus in solidarity with the poor through our advocacy against the bills of death like death penalty, abortion, total population control and divorce. This is the arena of everyday life. Yes, this tradition underlines the truth that God is with us in all the events of our lives. One may even cite this story: Jollibee with a family who takes time to bow their heads and pray: HINDI NAHIHIYA! NAGPAPASALAMAT! SALAMAT LORD PARA KAY

MOMMY, PARA KAY DADDY AT SA JOLLIBEE NA ITO!

To illustrate this, one gazes on a most amazing holy man, a mountain climber. His name is Pier Giorgio Frassati.

Pier Giorgio Frassati was born on April 6, 1901 and died on July 4, 1925 at the age of 24. He was a practical joker who combined political activism and worked for social justice. He developed a deep spiritual life with his love of the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother with his dedication as a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, sparing time for the sick, the needy, the orphans. He joined the Catholic Student Federation and Catholic Action and Popular Party that promoted the Church's teaching of "Rerum Novarum".

He said: "Charity is not enough; we need social reform." Mountain climbing was his favorite sports. He loved the arts, theatre museums and operas. His love for the arts was complemented by his studies of the works of St. Paul, St. Catherine of Siena and Savonarola. On 20th of May, 1990 John Paul beatified him and declared him, "Man of the eight beatitudes."

"Behold the man of the eight Beatitudes, who bears in himself the grace of the Gospel, the Good News, the joy of salvation offered to us by Christ." (John Paul II, Cracovia, 27 March 1997)

These traditions flow out of the abundance of the grace of the Trinity in all of us. Each has touched the lives of young people. Each complement the other. No one tradition can claim superiority. Like a mighty river, each can be considered a wave whose source is the immense power of Triune God. Let us reflect even more deeply, "the human being is fully oneself only when he meets God and can abandon himself in the embrace of the Trinity". (Pope John Paul II)

### **A Reflection:**

Servant leadership calls us to bring the gospel story in every facet of life. The home, the school and even the world of business and politics, culture and economy is the arena of transforming humanity. A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality. It effects what it signifies. The servant leader makes present the person of Jesus and his church. He/she makes Jesus come alive in a world that thirsts for him.

### **Conclusion: the Quilt of servant leadership**

A quilt is a type of blanket, traditionally composed of three layers of fiber: a woven cloth top, a layer of batting or wadding and a woven back, combined using the

technique of quilting (Wikipedia). It is unique because it is pieced together with several pieces of cloth.

Let us use the image of the quilt to piece together the truth of servant leadership sewn together from the various traditions of Christian history. The servant leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the service of the “new evangelization” is called to be a contemplative in action, a virtuous man/woman engaged in the arena of social justice, a man/woman shaped by the Word of God and has the ability to build the community through the Spiritual gifts of its members, a man/woman who incarnates Jesus and tells and re – tells the story of Jesus and his church for the world. In short, the servant leader is mystic and sage, prophet and priest, minister and pastor.

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