



## **Finding and Empowering Your Replacement/New Leaders**

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Presented by Terri DiBacco, July 2024

My name is Terri DiBacco, I lived my weekend in April of 2013 in the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and am currently in service to Region 2 as Coordinator and Vice-Coordinator for the National Secretariat. I am humbled to be with you today and sincerely thank you for your presence. You could be at the beach, in the mountains or at a lake this summer day, but you chose to share with your brothers and sisters in Christ, this day to be in friendship to learn, laugh, love, listen.

There are hundreds, most likely thousands, of books, blogs, podcasts, courses on Leaders and Leadership. I have minutes to hopefully inspire you, help you to understand your role, give you some ideals to look for in future leaders. I am blessed to have a wealth of friends that I have met over the years in Cursillo that have shared their wisdom on leadership - in talks or books or just loving conversations. That is why I am here - someone believed in me.

We know from the Rector's Guide outline for the Leaders Rollo that the definition of leaders is: those who lead and guide; those who having heard the call of the Lord, decisively launch themselves into action with an open and well-balanced spirit and with a criterion of supernatural efficacy. What does that simply mean?

My company recently had John Maxwell, a New York Times bestselling author, speaker, and coach talk with us at a regional awards meeting. How does Maxwell define leadership? "A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way." He said that the greatest leadership is by example. "You must do, act, say, and be the person you want your team to be. Leadership is a visual thing."

I read recently Rich Parsons' blog, a success coach, and he asks "Are leaders born or are they made?" I also believe leaders are made and agree that although there are certain traits and personalities that some are born with that launch people faster. If you were asked to list leadership qualities, I am certain that you could do that. But, if I asked you to decide if those were learned or inherited, you'd likely not be able to answer that question well. Does it really matter?

I have a six-year-old granddaughter who is bold, inquisitive and outspoken. Some would say that she is bossy - I see that she has leadership skills. Rich shared that Saint Mother Teresa likely had some inherited qualities that she called upon in her passion for people and for leading an effort for a more peaceful and kinder world. Do we know exactly what was internal and what was learned? Again, does it matter he asks? He said that she was such a gift to the world with a heart for fulfilling her passion and vocation.

Bishop Robert Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, and the founder of Word on Fire Ministry, speaks of Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth II as great leaders that he admires.

So, where do great leaders in our time come from? Every region, of all the demographics you can think of, has leaders in their midst. Some are more silent and others more vocal. Some are totally organized with binders and hole punched libraries of documents, and some fly by the seat of their pants. What is great to me, might not be the same for you. Does that make either of us wrong? No. Age and gender are not as big a factor as you may believe. There are youth in our Movement that have more leadership potential in them than many well-seasoned adults. Young and old, men and women: American, Latin, Asian...it does not matter. There are leaders everywhere, just waiting for their opportunity, to be recognized, encouraged and supported, to step into the right moment at the right time. To listen and respond to the call of the Holy Spirit.

We know from the Leaders Rollo that a leader must know their ideal and their reality - to have discipline, friendliness, initiative, and generosity. And supernatural qualities as a living faith, humility, hope and charity.

So, again, where do great leaders come from? Possibly right where you're sitting.

I follow Pete Burak, a young man who has created a program called Intentional Disciples, is an author at Renewal Ministries and with whom Cef Aguillon, our English Language Coordinator, shared with me a few months ago. Pete asks "Who is your Timothy or Titus or Silas from the New Testament?" Read those books this weekend - they are only two or three pages each. "Who are you called to invest in? Who could one day step into the mission that the Lord has for [Cursillo]? Who is the person who the Lord is bringing into a relationship with you that you are called to teach? Who do you have that is willing to step into and be trained into the new role?"

Cef in his rollo for the virtual national encounter back in July of 2020, shared that "Your first thought might be about what you are lacking. But God sees

what you already have: a willingness to serve Him. Be assured that He won't leave you on your own. God will give you the wisdom you need, He will lead you to the resources you are looking for, and He will send you people to help you. He will even supply you with courage and confidence. Therefore, be alert to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. He is counting on you!"

Cef continued, "God delights in calling people we'd least expect to do His work. He chose David, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, a youth at the time, to be the future king of Israel. God chose a young Jewish woman and a carpenter from the small town of Nazareth to be the parents of His Son, Jesus. He chose ordinary fishermen to become His apostles and lead the Church."

Cef continues - "God looks beyond professional accomplishments and social status. God always looks into the hearts of His people. He is always looking for men and women who love Him and are willing to be obedient to His call."

How did Christ lead? Jesus created himself in his disciples and then they were empowered to go create Him in others. He invested in only a few disciples teaching them how to live and think, how to imitate him, then He sent them to carry out his mission. I believe that Jesus led in forgiveness. I believe one of the most powerful moments of his leadership is the scene on the cross when Jesus asks the Father to forgive them. There will be many moments in the life of a leader when someone opposes or privately or publicly challenges you. It will take nothing short of the Jesus in you, to respond in the way Jesus did.

We know that in any organization we have to be able to recognize those future leaders. We need to look for them in our environments. At our Region 2 Encounter in the Spring, Monsignor Roldan of the Trenton, New Jersey Diocese, encouraged us in his meditation that we need to be always looking for our replacements. Unlike politicians who are looking to be re-elected on the first day of their term, we need to look for who will replace us after our terms have ended. It is not a lifetime appointment, my friends.

Pete Burak said that we are irreplaceable. Yes, that is what I said. He said that "It's impossible because no one is a copy of you. God has created the one and only you, gifted with unique talents that are the foundation of your personality. We need to form people, so that they can be in the ROLE." So, when my term is up and I am no longer the coordinator of Cursillo at any level, we don't need another Terri DiBacco, we need another coordinator of Cursillo. I also agree with Pete in that there is a role and a job and a title that needs to be filled and it's impossible to expect that person that fills the role to be exactly like you or me and we shouldn't want that.

It is true that we do align with personalities more like us, that is just human nature. According to a study published in the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, actual similarity leads us to liking people because they validate us by liking what we like, therefore we evaluate them positively. Do you think Eduardo perhaps read that journal? He certainly understood the way we interact in our own environments: our families, our communities - our square meter!

Although it may be easier or even required to work independently today, meaning the new "work from home" culture, people benefit from social connections, from community. We know that a healthy social network protects both your physical and mental health. We are learning that lesson the hard way from the last several years of isolation from our families, our schools, our workplaces, our parishes.

In Fundamental Ideals II, we read those human beings, social by nature, have always formed groups for the achievement of their mutual perfection: families, societies, etc. Group reunion promotes living the Christian life in friendship with others. Ultreya expands that friendship to our communities. Observe the people in these groups. Listen to conversations.

As good leaders we also need to understand and embrace that a person different from us may actually provide new knowledge and experiences. When asked what I love about Cursillo, my reply is the community that gathers at each encounter who fills me with friendship, teaches me patience in listening to understand a language I am not well versed in, and gives me hope that what we are doing for our church and our communities is what Jesus has asked of us. I also love celebrating at Mass with everyone that fully participates in worship, prayer and praise.

You often hear about the rule of 3 - as in piety, study and action; faith, hope and charity; snap, crackle, pop. Today we will have the rule of 5. For every place I looked to prepare for this talk, there were 5 elements - 5 benefits, 5 beliefs, 5 building blocks, 5 actions, 5 biblical leaders, 5 methods of Cursillo. There are no consequences as we say in Cursillo circles!

## **5 Benefits of Diversity**

Harvey Deutschendorf is an author and speaker and wrote for Fast Company, an online marketing publication and just as helpful in our apostolate, the five benefits of spending time with people who are different from us:

### **1. Increase your self-awareness and acceptance of others.**

This helps to keep us away from the “us versus them” and “right versus wrong” mentality, Harvey says. We know this is a challenge for we all have those prejudices and judgments of others, often unconscious and non-verbal.

### **2. Think critically.**

This awareness will challenge us to change our own perceptions when we find someone else’s point of view makes sense to us. When we actually listen to understand and not to reply. When we help our friends to see things differently. We can be convinced through trust, humility and love to look at something with a new perspective.

### **3. Enjoy the talents of others.**

All of us have strengths and weaknesses for various situations. Someone may be a rainmaker who has little interest and patience in the details. This person needs someone in their circle who is a detailed person. In my real estate career, I am the detailed, organized, keep it legal, provide disclosure person of my team. And I have success in catching a moving target and getting successfully to the anticipated outcome. We need those in our schools and secretariats that are learners and able to teach our Foundational Charism, event planners for our encounters, social butterflies; but also, those that have a keen financial sense, a good and organized note taker for minutes, a technical guru with the internet and website.

Those who like to sit at the head table and also those who enjoy sitting in the back of the room. There are the actors and there are stage crew. I always enjoyed the supporting roles and knew the lines but never tried out for the leading role until I was asked and encouraged, and then supported. More on that later.

### **4. Make better decisions.**

Harvey continues that having people around us who are able to see situations from many different angles helps us to get a more complete and clearer picture from which we can make more informed decisions. In charity, we need to have an open mind and heart to listen to others whose opinions differ, and why. So many today take a stand not having all the facts, just what they hear the talking heads speak of as their truth.

### **5. Add some zest and imagination to life.**

Harvey says that we need challenges in our lives to keep us aware and stimulated, opening up new and exciting ideas for us to enjoy and have fun

with. I know you have those people who make you shake your head and roll your eyes at their antics sometimes, those who make you laugh and those who make you feel joyful at their presence and then are those you are hopeful they do not show up at a meeting. We need to see people not only as they truly are, but as what they could be. I have learned not to be a first impression decider. Some of my closest friends are people I originally thought would not be good for me. We tend to evaluate people and events according to the worldly rules and what we see on the outside.

## **5 Fundamental Beliefs**

Steven Covey, another favorite writer of mine, penned in Trust & Inspire Leadership, that there are 5 fundamental beliefs:

- 1.** "All people have greatness inside them . . . so our joy as a leader is to unleash their potential by seeing it, communicating it and developing it.
- 2.** People are whole people, body, heart, mind and soul. So, our job is to inspire them not merely motivate. People not only want, but need inspiration. We all have desires to give back, to have a cause, to find fulfillment. We aren't in our leadership roles to find people to work for us, but to find people to inspire to work **with** us.
- 3.** There is enough for everyone. So, our job is to elevate **caring above competing**. When we come from abundance, jealousy dissipates. People become eager to work together and applaud them when they succeed. Friends look for opportunities to celebrate and enhance the virtues of the people around them because they genuinely care for our brothers and sisters and their well-being.
- 4.** Leadership is [serving]. . . put service above self-interest. **Seeing leadership as service will impact our behavior more powerfully and enduringly than perhaps anything else we do."**

As our Spanish Language Coordinator, Juan Ruiz, wrote for the book, Study of the Charism, "Because there are no servants, only friends, because there are no personalities, only persons . . . because it is easier to listen to disciples . . . Neither lessons, nor teachers, nor orders, nor control, only SERVICE."

In Matthew Chapter 20 Verses 25-28, Jesus tells His disciples that leaders should not exercise authority over people. Instead, whoever wants to

become great must lower himself to be a servant. Leaders realize that serving others is the only way to lead with a pure heart, free of pride and arrogance.

St Augustine wrote - "Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds. Lay the foundation of humility."

**5.** Influence. "Influence is created from the inside out . . . so our job as a leader is to go first. If you wish to influence others," if you want to improve communication within your diocese, if you want to change the culture of perhaps your family, don't wait for others, just go first. Steven tells us to "be the first to: listen, admit you were wrong, keep a commitment, hold yourself accountable, admit that you are unsure, show respect, clarify expectations, apologize."

Mr. Covey reminds us that a model for people worldwide was Fred Rogers- Mr. Rogers- "who was able to influence and change many lives through his kindness and vulnerability.

He was one of the first to model racial equality and love for your neighbor to children, and their parents, modeling the way he hoped others would act and his influence was profound."

My friend, Maria Gallagher, the Executive Director for the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation and author of three inspirational books, wrote in her 2nd book, *Mercy's Power*, that we are called to spread the love of Christ to everyone with whom we have contact. She noted that Pope Francis put it this way: "The future of humankind isn't exclusively in the hands of politicians, or great leaders, or big companies. Yes, they do hold an enormous responsibility and influence. But the future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognize the other as YOU and themselves as part of the US. We all need each other. "

Maria continues that "the more we reach out to others with love, the more likely others are to "catch" that love and spread it to others. In this way, our evangelization becomes contagious."

## **5 Building Blocks of Catholic Leadership**

Michael Naughton writes for the Institute for Catholic Leadership at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, in his book True Leadership that is based on 5 building blocks of Catholic leadership:

He said that current leadership models usually begin with questions of skill, some include gifting, fewer attempt a limited engagement with character. "True Christian leadership teaches a different model, that a leader is someone a person is, rather than simply something a person does." Eduardo taught that in Cursillo, to BE is more important than to DO. It is essential and fundamental to have:

**1. Faith.** Basically, faith involves trusting in the grace of God, that He rules our world and that it is necessary to be in proper relationship with Him as a simple practical matter. Steve Krause, the President of the NACG from Tulsa, Oklahoma, in his talk for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Regional Encounter back in July of 2012, shared that "We need a strong life of prayer and study as these are the "fuels" of evangelization and the apostolate. Without a strong life grounded in the Lord, we will run out of gas very quickly. As long as we take time for prayer and study, we will have the tools we need to continue to transform our environments." We need to be very clear on that.

**2. Character.** We all know who said: I look to the day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. Dr. Martin Luther King. Leaders require strong character in order to fulfill responsibilities without losing their balance.

We all know of examples of talented people whose leadership was hindered by their lack of character. They may have impressive qualities that gained them the influence, but were misguided, or unreasonable, and self-serving. There are many resources to deal with character development in how to be humble, courageous, honest and generous. We can identify what makes for good character but we need to grow in character and that requires time and effort.

**3. Vocation.** In the Church, vocation has most often referred to the call to priestly or religious life. Vocation means more than the call to consecrated life. All Christians have a vocation, a set of tasks and relationships, a life prepared for them by God that will bring into play their energies and gifts.

Pope Benedict XVI spoke during his visit to the United States that prayer is the first means by which we come to know the Lord's will for our lives. Programs, plans and projects have their place but the discernment of a vocation is the fruit of dialogue with the Lord, he said. We have all asked - Why am I here? The answer Jesus gave us is this: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is: You shall love



your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the laws. Matthew 22:37-40. We need to be very clear on this.

Cef Aguillon also shared with us from his 2020 National Encounter talk - "Each of us has chosen a way of life: marriage, priesthood, religious life, single life, and it is within this state that we find our vocation. It is the Lord Himself who has called us. Yes, the Lord himself invites each of us to live our vocation. For Cursillistas, that call is to communicate the message that "God loves us" through friendship." We need to be very clear on that also.

**4. Gifts.** Everyone is gifted in various ways and uniquely. **Our gifts are not gifts of God to us, they are gifts from God to others through us.** Natural gifts we often call talents such as music, art, athletic ability. Our circumstances in life are gifts - our family, education, the time and place into which we were born. Mr. Naughton continues that our personality and temperament are gifts. He said that a true leader makes a study of their own and other's gifts in order to bring those gifts into play for success.

**5. Skill.** Skills need to be rooted in and guided by the first four foundations of faith, character, vocation and gifts. It is perfecting a set of techniques.

1. Organization of life.
2. Communicating well.
3. Working in team leadership.
4. Leading purposeful and focused meetings (meaning short!) and
5. Giving and receiving praise and correction.

## **5 Actions for Empowering**

Pete Bureck continues in his leadership course with actions that we need to take as leaders to raise up and empower the next leader.

**1. Encouragement.** Encouragement is a simple act of compassion you consciously give another by sharing your light with them. It's making eye contact, smiling, and acknowledging their presence. It's saying you see and hear them. The most valuable gift you offer another is your time, so be fully present with others. Pray for the person you want to encourage. Letting someone know you've prayed for them can be a great way to start a meaningful conversation, and it's powerful for the recipient to know that you've taken the situation to God.

**2. Recognize gifts.** Express that you see something in them. Affirm the gifts that they have been given.

**3. Celebrate success.** Express it - publicly. Celebrating our success is important because it increases motivation towards goals, and it boosts someone's confidence so then they feel more empowered to continue to do what they are called upon to do. Moderate failure, we will never eliminate it. But learn from it. Positions of leadership bring trials, pressures and temptations and the greater the responsibility, the greater the pressures. Establish a game plan and set boundaries.

**4. Establish clarity.** We need to communicate. Clarity will help you to prepare and structure vital conversations. It consists of five elements: purpose, responsibility, authority, information, and objectives. They all influence one another. The secret to any worthwhile conversation is this: Talk about things that matter to you. Forget political correctness at times and talk about what's really, really important to you - you're a person who leads the way. Ask your team, your committee, your family, your small group- what's really, really important to them. We so often fail to ask the hard questions for understanding. Come from curiosity in seeking to learn the who, what, when, where, and why of any situation. We make judgments on a limited understanding of all the circumstances.

Bishop Barron said that the single most important quality of a leader is clarity of vision. He continues that "Our basic job is to make sure there are people in place who share your vision and have practical skills to implement it. It's the establishment and communication of the vision," he says. This is where the School of Leaders is vital in learning and sharing the vision of the Movement, to learn the charisma, mentality, purpose and method.

Bishop warns that every great leader in history ultimately comes to be somewhat disliked due to the cost of making controversial choices and taking controversial stances, necessitating the importance of courage.

But recall what Cef said earlier, God will give you courage. Bishop says, "If you say you are a leader and your number one priority is to be popular, you will be the worst leader ever. Trust me. That is one of the worst signs that you will be a lousy leader."

**5. Establish a pattern, routine, and rhythm.** We need to teach, model, release and repeat. Watch me do it, let's do it together and now you do it. Or as John Maxwell says - Know the Way, Go the Way and Show the Way. Back to the rule of 3s.

As Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Gaston Rioux presented at the Canadian Conference of Catholic Cursillos back in 2003, "The fundamental core of the Cursillo Movement is the School of Leaders and it is here that the Leaders in your diocese will deepen not simply their understanding of Cursillo, but will in fact, deepen their understanding of the Gospel and the call on their lives as baptized Christians. The Cursillo Movement provides a means to help and support people to live out their vocations as lay people in the world. The Cursillo method provides the way: **1.** To make the conversion experienced on the 3-day weekend ongoing and progressive, as all authentic conversions must be **2.** To support the work of changing the environments, one person at a time. **3.** To allow people to become the best that they can be. **4.** To allow them to bloom where God has placed them. **5.** To do it all as lay people in the world, being Christians in the marketplace of everyday life."

We can model several lay leaders from the bible:

Ruth: Leaders put others before themselves.

Noah: Leaders do what's right, even when it isn't easy or popular.

Peter: Leaders don't quit in the midst of failure.

Mary: Leaders know how to prioritize.

Paul: Leaders are willing to admit when they are wrong.

In my class with Pete Burak, he asks - If there is someone out there that you know has more to give this world through our Cursillo Movement, something positive to offer, but they may have expressed fear, self-doubt or are being doubted, encourage them. Consider coaching and mentoring them, challenge and push them, help them take hold of opportunities to move to the next level. Be gentle and have patience though.

Leaders take action.

Leaders accept challenges.

Leaders move past obstacles.

Leaders seek out and take advantage of opportunities.

You are sitting in this room because you are a leader in some capacity in your environments. Know that you are not alone nor asked to navigate on your own. Reach out to your diocesan leaders, spiritual advisors, regional leadership. We will get answers for you, help guide you, direct you to resources, listen and learn where we can all benefit from a loving friendship. Let us help you perhaps create a roadmap, help to set expectations, to work on your apostolate plan, *complete your annual report timely. That's a not-so-subtle hint, my friends!*

How many of you do not have a plan for the next year, three years, five years? Of what you wish to accomplish, learn, adjust in your local diocese?

I encourage you to return home to your communities and have frank and honest conversations with your leadership teams, your 4th Day community, your spiritual advisors: with a look towards the next year - in weekends, leaders' school, perhaps fundraising. What do you do well, what can be improved upon? The apostolic plan is provided to you as a great tool to identify needs, implement solutions and evaluate progress. Regular evaluation is so important to maintain the focus and momentum needed to accomplish the purpose of our beloved Cursillos in Christianity - to find friends, become real friends, to have friends truly believe that God loves them.

And finally, Eduardo wrote in Beyond the Challenges that he loved the past, loved the present and was fascinated by the future, because thanks to God and the efforts of men (and women), the world evolves. He continued that what matters is that Christians who really want to be Christians begin to understand that we have to accept, not only with **Hope**, but with **Optimism** and even **Passionate Conviction**, the continuous changes that life imposes.

Christ is counting on You! DeColores