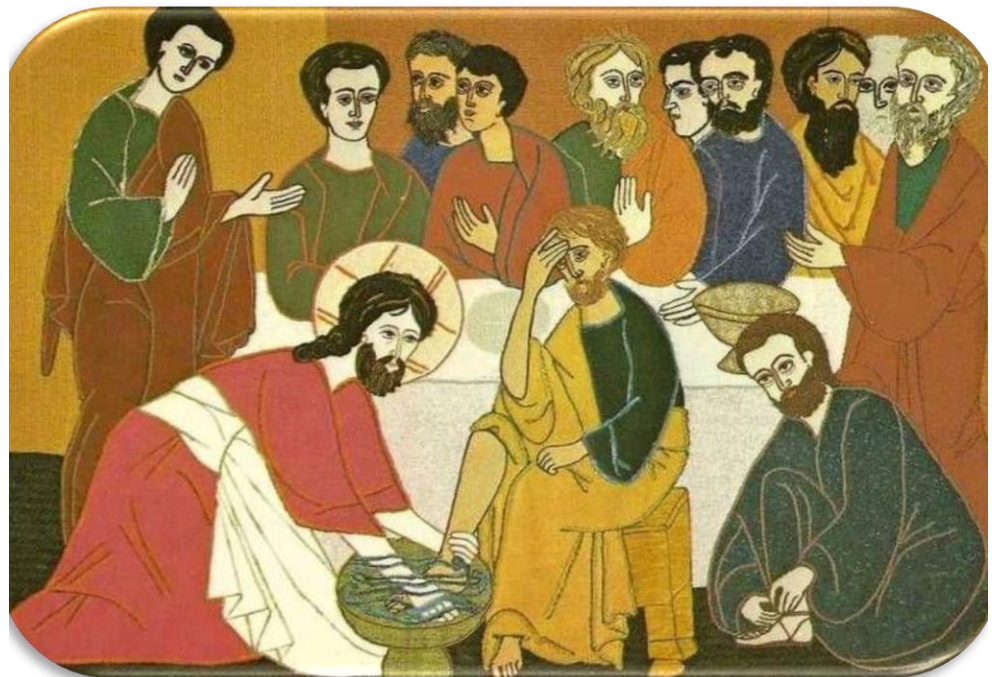




## Being a leader within AIC: a mission, a service In the light of the Gospel



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## Introduction to the topic

This first reflection on the topic of leadership invites us to reflect on the following question: how can we understand and live our leadership mission as a **service**?

As member of an ecclesial movement, our leadership naturally has an **evangelical characteristic**. It is to be lived as a **mission of the Church**: we have received it, it does not belong to us, it is for a limited amount of time.

This evangelical basis, the imitation of **Christ the Servant**, who gave the example of washing feet so that we in turn could do the same, allows us to lay down some principles and some concrete guidelines concerning **how to exercise this responsibility**:

- A **spiritual** responsibility, the basis of the mission
- A responsibility of **unity**, the basis of fraternity
- A responsibility of **openness**, in order to move forward

## 1. Spiritual Responsibility

**The basis of our mission**, this spiritual responsibility invites us to **nourish ourselves with God's word** so that we continue to learn how to give the best of ourselves, as Jesus did.

*“The more you get into the rhythm of regularly meeting Jesus in this way, the more you will hear him whispering to you in the silence.”*

*Sr Françoise Petit, DC*

*“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9)*

Praying, listening to the Spirit makes us grow in charity, humility and simplicity. **God shows us the way**, with our talents and our limitations.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.”*  
*(Psalm 127).*

Our spiritual growth progressively builds within us a certainty unity of life, strength and serenity from God that allows us to:

- ✓ Build **fairer relationships** with others
- ✓ **Bring out the best** in others
- ✓ Take the **necessary step back** in situations of conflict
- ✓ **Analyze** facts in the **light of the Gospel**
- ✓ **Go deeper** in our way of understanding social, political, ethical and other questions.



*“A person without prayer has no strength.”  
(Saint Vincent, 13th October 1658 – Vol X, No. 103)*

## 2. Responsibility of Unity

Saint Vincent and Saint Louise understand the importance of being united and living in fraternal communion to better love and serve our brothers and sisters!

It is our responsibility to inspire the groups to create this positive atmosphere.

Here are a few examples of practices to be encouraged:

- ✓ Promote opportunities for informal meetings
- ✓ Motivate members to take an interest in what other groups and countries are doing
- ✓ Share your faith and the Word of God
- ✓ Dare to ask for forgiveness
- ✓ Give grace together for the joys received



*“Live together as having but one heart and one soul so that by this union of spirit you may be a true image of the unity of God (...)  
I pray for this to the Holy Spirit (...) that He may be yours likewise and give you profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties, which can only be frequent among the poor.”*

*(Saint Vincent, Vol. IV, No. 1389).*

### 3. Responsibility of openness

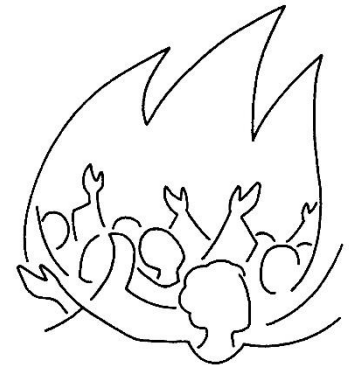
Today, no role of responsibility can be seen as a solitary job, at any level. Decisions are taken **together**.

Saint Vincent and Saint Louise’s way of being and acting shows that they had this intuition. Their collaboration, together and with others, illustrates that they lived by these principles; principles that today we call **co-responsibility, delegation, information, participation**, etc.

In order to live by this essential principles, it is our responsibility to always remain **open, receptive, ready to listen and respectful** towards those who are counting on us to ensure the delivery of the services that have been entrusted to us. It is a question of wanting to build and maintain an **atmosphere of dialogue, trust** and deep **reflection** with regards to our ways of working.

Roles of responsibility also require **detachment** from oneself, from **one’s own ideas** and from **what has always been done**. We must identify with lucidity, all the while being coherent with our charism, what prevents us from moving towards a more creative vision of the future. Opening up our hearts and minds requires the **audacity** and **zeal** that are part of our DNA as members of the Vincentian Family.

*“If love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame;  
if love is a sun, zeal is its ray.  
Zeal is unconditional in the love of God.”*  
(Saint Vincent, Vol. 12, Conferences, No. 211, 22nd August 1659)



#### AIC’s suggestions for reflection in groups:

1

**Spiritual responsibility:** How do you take the time to resources yourselves, individually and as a group?

2

**Responsibility of unity:** How can we create within our group a fraternal environment that promotes unity? How can we be united between groups and at national level? What means do we need to achieve this?

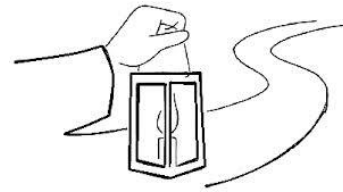
3

**Responsibility of openness:**

- a) How can we move forward in a way that promotes more participation from everyone?
- b) How can we avoid being locked into habits and maintaining prejudices?
- c) Have you ever blocked progress? Why? What were your fears? What helped you to overcome them?
- d) Where am I in the audacious mission of encouraging my group to move in this direction of increased openness?

## Prayer: Being a Servant

Being a servant is not a job, it is a gift.  
Being a servant who follows Jesus is an offering  
of love.  
A Servant does not put herself forward.



She is not the light; she is the hand that lifts the flame.  
She does not speak to command but to help.  
Her role is to promote well-being, to reduce pain,  
To create the right conditions for happiness to be flourish,  
To prepare the ground, to sing music she did not create.

Her time no longer belongs to her.  
We are not named servants, we are called, we are invited  
And we choose to become one in response to that call.

Being a servant is a great risk  
Because all that is left is the gift of self.  
Lord, you call us to be servants, to be the Gospel  
Put your answer in us, make us "servants of love".





Training Reflection on Leadership

November 2019

Topic 2

## Being a Leader in AIC: A Commitment

### Following in Saint Vincent's Footsteps



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2. Efficient Servant Leadership	2
3. The Qualities of a Good Vincentian Leader	3
Prayer	4



## Introduction to the Topic

After reflecting on the way of understanding and living the leadership mission as a service, taking inspiration from the Gospel (Reflection 1), this second reflection on the topic of leadership will explore the notion of leadership as a commitment that follows in Saint Vincent's footsteps.

We will first look at the notion of leadership in a context of service. We will see that there are different styles of leadership, which will lead to the question of efficient servant leadership.

We will finish with a reflection on the different qualities of a good leader in general, and more specifically, of a good Vincentian leader who is at the service of others.

### 1. Servant Leadership

**Leadership** is a dimension in all human groups that have objectives that they wish to achieve, regardless of the domain.

A simple definition of leadership could be a **person's ability** to:

- ✓ **Motivate** and **unite** a group of people,
- ✓ So that they can achieve a **common goal**,
- ✓ In an **environment of mutual trust**.



In the context of servant leadership, leaders put themselves **at the service of their team**. They guide it with a compelling vision, clear behavioral expectations and are authentic practitioners of the values proclaimed<sup>1</sup>. They respect subsidiarity and **encourage each person to take social responsibility**<sup>2</sup>. They seek to achieve the common objectives, recognizing and appreciating what each member of the team can offer.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenleaf & Steven Covey, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Greenleaf – AT&T "The Servant as Leader," 1970, p.16.



## 2. Efficient Servant Leadership

Several styles of leadership can be found in the literature on this topic. Some of these styles imply a certain way of leading the team. Here are four main styles with their advantages and disadvantages.

Style	In a few words	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>1. Autocratic Authoritarian</b>	'I' decide: <i>"Do what I say"</i>	Gets quick results in times of crisis; useful for managing a person who refuses to collaborate.	Low level of participation and autonomy in the team: can be demotivating, not appropriate in complex situations.
<b>2. Paternalistic Persuasive Visionary</b>	'I' decide, explaining my choices, I lead others towards a higher overall goal: <i>"Follow me"</i>	Charismatic; accessible, direct, strong link with the work; mobilization towards a clear objective; useful when changes are needed.	Difficult to apply if the vision is unrealistic. Lack of autonomy and responsibility in the team.
<b>3. Participative, Collaborative</b>	"We" decide together	The team comes first; use of collective intelligence; develops skills, cohesion, harmony, creativity.	The process is often long and slow; doesn't work in times of crisis to get quick results.
<b>4. Delegative</b>	"You" decide	Tasks are divided among the members according to their abilities; more responsibility generates a lot of motivation.	Cannot be used if the team members are not sufficiently competent and motivated.

There is no "best" style of leadership! Each type of task requires a different style of leadership. **For efficient leadership**, it is necessary to **adopt the leadership style** that is best **adapted to the situation and the context** of the work that needs to be done.

The "servant" leader relies mostly on the **participative style**, but can apply **others if necessary**. It is therefore necessary to adapt to people and to the context.

In order to be more efficient, it is also important to take every opportunity **develop the autonomy** of your collaborators. This is particularly important in your AIC groups where it is recommended to only occupy positions of responsibility for a **limited time** and **rotate** responsibilities among the members.

*Our AIC groups therefore have members who have already had a role of responsibility, those who have one at the moment, and those who will have one in the future.*



This system, which is beneficial both for the group as a whole and for each of its members, allows for learning, practicing and maintaining quality leadership while offering opportunities for **individual and collective development**. It also contributes to improving or maintaining the quality of the services that we offer to the people we support.

### 3. The Qualities of Good Vincentian Leadership

The **quality of the leadership**, more than any other factor, determines the **success** or the **failure** of an organization. Saint Vincent observed this when he founded the first Charity that was at the origin of our AIC groups today.

*“The poor suffer less from a lack of generosity than from a lack of **organization**.”*  
Saint Vincent

A study<sup>3</sup> reveals that what we appreciate most in leaders is that they are:

- 1) **Honest**: reliable; there is a link between their words and their actions ; they place importance on ethical values and norms;
- 2) **Planning ahead**: they are concerned about the future; they communicate a direction (medium/long-term vision, mission, objectives);
- 3) **Inspiring**: enthusiastic; energetic; positive; encouraging; sincerely passionate about the organization’s mission; are a charismatic example to others;
- 4) **Competent**: capable; efficient; have the skills needed to do the work; have relevant experience and an ability to work with others; have interpersonal skills and efficient networks.

There are of course other important qualities that a leader should have. Certain are more specific to Vincentian leaders, who are invited to follow the example of Jesus (see Reflection 1), making themselves “**servants**” of the team first, **supporting** and centered on the members.



Good Vincentian leaders therefore:

- ✓ Choose to **serve/guide**, **putting the team first** and not themselves;
- ✓ Encourage **fluid communication** and know how to **listen** and be there for each person;
- ✓ Know how to **delegate**, consult and involve all members, bringing out their strengths;
- ✓ Build a **fraternal and caring atmosphere** within the team;
- ✓ Are **consistent**: once a decision has been taken, they do not change their mind so the members know where to go/what to do;
- ✓ Are **humble**: if a decision turns out to be wrong, they are able to make amends quickly, explaining why to the team; they ask for help;
- ✓ **Recognize** the contributions of each member and **thank** them for the tasks they accomplish.
- ✓ Have their actions rooted in **prayer**.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2007.

## Good news: Leadership can be learned!

Although it's true that some people are born with greater natural gifts than others for guiding and leading, **leadership is a collection of skills** that can almost all be **learned and improved on**.

### AIC's suggestions for reflection in groups

1

#### Leadership styles:

- a) What style(s) of leadership do you use?
- b) What type of leadership do you appreciate the most and why?

2

#### Qualities of a good Vincentian leader:

- a) What qualities of a good Vincentian leader do you think you have and/or need to acquire?
- b) What would you like to improve in your leadership? How could you do it?

## Prayer

Leadership is hard to define.

Lord, let us be the ones to define it with justice.

Leadership is like hands full of water.

Lord, let us be the ones to share it with those who are thirsty.

Leadership is not about watching and correcting.

Lord, let us remember it is about listening and connecting.

Leadership is not about telling people what to do.

Lord, let us find out what people want.

Leadership is less about the love of power and more  
about the power of love.

Lord, as we continue to undertake the role of leader,

let us be affirmed by the servant leadership  
we witness in your son Jesus.

Let us walk in the path He has set  
and let those who follow be guided by Him.

Let our greatest passion be compassion.

Our greatest strength, love.

Our greatest victory, the reward of peace.

In leading, never let us fail to follow,

In loving, never let us fail.

Amen



## Being a Leader at AIC: 3 Priorities

Teamwork, fluid communication and preparing the handover



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3. Preparing the handover	4
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## Introduction to the topic

After reflecting on the way of understanding and living the mission of leader as a service, taking inspiration from the Gospel (Reflection 1) and the notion of leadership as a commitment following in the footsteps of Saint Vincent (Reflection 2), this third and final reflection is dedicated to three priorities to which all good Vincentians must be attentive.

This reflection will look at:

- ✓ The basic rules of teamwork
- ✓ The importance of good internal and external communication
- ✓ The preparation of the handover



### 1. Teamwork

One of the essential elements in any Vincentian project is that it is the result of efficient and harmonious teamwork undertaken by a community of volunteers.

**Harmonious collaboration** doesn't happen by chance. It is the result of trust and respect on the part of the team members.

- ✓ **Trust** is built day by day. We learn to trust others when we see them exhibiting firm values, a positive attitude, skills, faithfulness to promises and reliable behavior. When it is mutual, trust promotes a wonderful team spirit and a high level of motivation on the part of everyone involved in the work.

*“Trust, where it exists, gives wings to creativity.”*  
*AIC Diploma 2017, Module 3*

- ✓ **Respect** is founded on the recognition that we are all equal in God's eyes, but also all different as we have our own characteristics and experiences. All the ideas that the team members bring are precious and are worth listening to. We must be open to different points of view.

To achieve **efficient teamwork**, the leader must **coordinate** the team well and **delegate responsibilities**. This means knowing the team members well and looking for the potential and skills in each of them so as to be able to entrust them with the tasks that are most suited to them.



Each team member has her own talents and differences among team members make them **complementary**. Each person has their own role, manages a specific part of the project, each part being essential for the rest.



The leader seeks to obtain a **commitment** from each of the members in light of the common objective, each person contributing to the best of their abilities.

*Saint Paul tells us, in Chapter 12 of the first letter to the Corinthians, that within a community: "Not all are heads, not all are hands or feet..." but everyone works together as one body with Christ as the head.*  
*AIC Diploma 2017, Module 3*

A good leader also seeks to ensure **fluid communication** with and between the members of her team (*see point two*) and to **prepare the next team** (*see point three*).

## 2. Good communication

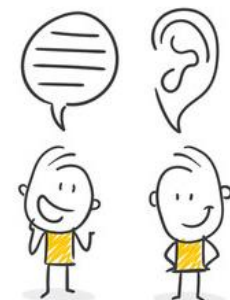
**Good communication at every level is essential.**

Communication within the international AIC network occurs at **several levels**. There is **internal** communication within the local groups, between local groups and the national Board, between the national associations in the international network and between national associations and AIC International. At each of these levels there is also **external** communication, concerning people who are external to AIC.

Good communication is essential at every level. It's what will **give life to our groups, our associations and our international network**. A group where the communication is good will be a group in which it's nice to be, somewhere we want to stay and get more involved in. So the quality of communication naturally influences the life of our groups and their revitalization.

*Good communication is also about knowing how to listen.*

Good communication is not just about giving information. **Informing** is necessary, but not enough. Communication is **also listening** and **taking an interest in the other**, what she has to say. It's about knowing how to welcome new ideas and taking the time to listen to what's going well but also what's not going so well.



Some ways of ensuring **good listening**:

- ✓ Making sure we have understood properly by reformulating what the other person has just said
- ✓ Not hesitating to ask questions and ask for clarifications
- ✓ Finding the right moment for each of the people we are in contact with

*Why is it so important to have good communication with AIC International?*

Having good communication with the 53 national associations in the AIC network allows the AIC international team to fulfil its mission of **supporting the volunteers** across the world in their service with the most disadvantaged people, notably by offering them ongoing training and **coordinating the international network** so that together we have a **bigger impact in our fight against poverty and injustice**.



Good communication about the local actions being carried out across the international is also vital for several reasons.

- At internal level, it allows us to **share experiences** and best practices with volunteers from the rest of the AIC network, whether this is through our website and/or our Facebook page or during visits and international meetings.
- At external level, having information about local actions allows us to:
  - a) Improve the **visibility of the actions** and services of AIC volunteers, which is essential to **attract new volunteers** and **encourage donors** to support our actions.
  - b) **Feed the work of AIC representatives**, who work within international organizations to raise public awareness about the issues of poverty and exclusion, by contributing the experiences of local AIC volunteers to make the voices of the most disadvantaged people heard within international bodies and so fight against the causes of poverty.



**We are the spokespeople for our associations!**

As AIC volunteers, we are often discrete. We have perhaps been educated not to talk too much about ourselves.

However it's not a question of speaking about ourselves, but rather about:

- **Thousands of AIC volunteers** who have been committing for more than 400 years following in the footsteps of Saint Vincent.
- **Our more disadvantaged brothers and sisters** who are living in situations of poverty and who need to be listened to, encouraged and supported to build a better future.



- **Our association**, which needs us to make itself known and to attract new volunteers who will allow us to ensure the continuation of our services and so to continue pursuing the **mission** that Saint Vincent has entrusted to us.

*So, let's not hesitate to speak about our association to those around us!*

### 3. Preparing the handover

In our Association, tasks and **responsibilities are not permanent**. Mandates are given for a limited amount of time. Saint Vincent planned for this in the 1<sup>st</sup> Rule.



Other than the fact that handovers create opportunities for individual and collective development, this way of functioning allows us to **prepare the team that will take over**, an essential step in order to ensure the **continuity** of our services and actions to support our brothers and sisters who live in situations of poverty.

This is an essential responsibility for leaders!

### AIC's Suggestions for Reflection in Groups



1

#### Teamwork:

- Exchange some examples of positive/difficult **experiences** of teamwork.
- How can we overcome the difficulties encountered and the **improve** the quality of our team's work?

2

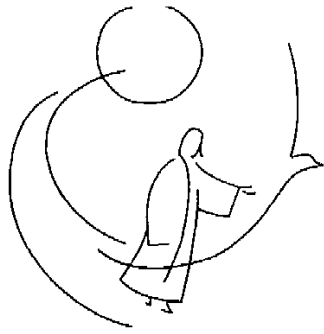
#### Good communication:

- What **challenges** do you encounter in the field of communication?
- How could you **improve** the communication in your group/association? With AIC International? With third parties?

3

#### Handover:

- What was **my experience** when I became a leader: my motivations? Challenges? What/who helped me?
- Have you thought about **who will follow you**? What can you do to **prepare and support her**?



## Prayer

Lord, give us your **Spirit of sharing**. In our day, at any moment and when meeting, may we be concerned about sharing. Help us to share our joy and friendship; help us to share our experiences and ideas. Help us, Lord, to give and help us to receive, for sharing is not only giving to others, it is also, and sometimes even more about accepting to receive. Help us to realise that we have much to learn from others, because what they can teach us can challenge us.

Lord, give us the **Spirit of searching and listening**. Help us to perceive the message that others bring us from you. May our minds and hearts be open. Help us to question our traditional ways of thinking and acting; help us to understand that our traditions are only a value and a strength to the extent that your Spirit constantly renews them.

Lord, give us the **Spirit of faith**. Give us the conviction that our task is important, and when we doubt ourselves, remind us that you will help us to accomplish it.



**Amen**