

"We empower one another" ... A Leadership Program for new Leaders.

In November 2020, The Union of International Superiors General (Women Religious) and the Union of Superiors General (Men Religious) held an online Leadership Program for those called to leadership in consecrated life in these challenging times. It was a journey together, exploring some personal experiences of leadership and reaping the wisdom they offer.



MODULE 1: FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF LEADERSHIP

Let us become familiar with some fundamental concepts of leadership: role, system, purpose, authority, power...

MODULE 2: THERE IS NO ONE WAY, BUT WE MAKE OUR WAY WHEN WE WALK

What does it mean to exercise the leadership of consecrated life at this turbulent moment history, in the world, in the Church and in our congregations?

MODULE 3: WEAVING COMMUNION

As leaders, we are called to grow more and more in the capacity for dialogue, non-violent communication, managing difference in relationships, generative listening...

MODULE 4: FOR I KNOW WELL THE SPRING THAT FLOWS AND RUNS, ALTHOUGH IT IS NIGHT

How is this leadership service that I live, day by day; what is sacred space and transparency of encounter with God?

MODULE 5: THE POOR TEACH US TO READ THE GOSPEL

In consecrated life, can we be leaders and prophets at the same time?

The five Modules that made up this Program were full of questions. Our job was not to respond to them, but rather to develop an approach, to acquire a mindset, to integrate concepts that help us to explore them and to use them as a resource.

Bernadette and Susanna completed the Course by Zoom. Despite the challenges of time difference and language, the value of the course was clear. We thought to ourselves how wonderful if new leaders in the Congregation could have access to it.

In some ways, the pandemic had given us the gift of time in one place to work on such projects. So, we began a project to explore the concepts and do whatever was needed to be able to share the program. We created a five-week online program using its resources through Teams or Zoom for sharing with our incoming Leaderships in the Province of the Assumption and Region of the Queen of Peace. We timed it to be held before the Leadership term began

Susanna translated all the materials into Korean and delivered not simply the PowerPoints but the commentary and interactive processes in Korean.

Bernadette adapted the program to use the same content and interactive processes but from a different perspective for the Leadership for Zimbabwe and South Africa,

shifting the questions from a position of European perspective to a perspective that had value for our Sisters there.

Our sharing also embedded the words of Venerable Mary Potter, our LCM spirit and personal experience.

An evaluation of both programs reflected how much our incoming Leaders appreciated the program. Just a few of the comments:

- *The content is applicable in different aspects of life, be it a leading or following position. It is useful in spiritual context in developing the sense of experiencing the presence of God in all that is around me, situations I encounter and ability to action it.*
- *On a personal level, I have benefited greatly from what I have learnt. Awareness is the key in the journey to Self-knowledge and Self-acceptance.*
- *I found the content in this course very informative and enriching. It was very relevant and specifically for Religious Leadership, which was different then from all other Leadership Courses I have attended due to this one was very specific and in context of our lives.*
- *Personally, I was able to have a passion to grow through leadership.*

For us, while the adaptation and preparation were time consuming, to be part of supporting our Sisters to expand their concepts of leadership, and indeed their own call to leadership, made it worth all the effort. Our hope is that it may be further developed in the future by those who follow us in Congregational Leadership.

Susanna Park and Bernadette Fitzgerald

