

**FORMATION SESSION 11:**

***Service and Servant Leadership***

“We must acknowledge that people in leadership of our institutions do not come as empty vessels to be filled with our stories. They have a story of their own, a perspective on life, on suffering, and on hope which has been forged from their own history, a story which gives impulse to their involvement in Ministry, and from which they weave purpose and direction. They come with their own spiritual energy, even though they may not be fully conscious of it. And yet, it is the energy which sets them alight with enthusiasm and interest and commitment. In other words, the most promising candidate for leadership comes with at least a nascent sense of personal mission already.” Rev Dr David Ranson

... Extract from MAM Leadership Framework.

|                                   | Program and Focus  | Guide Notes  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Prayer and Welcome:<br><br>10 min | Scripture Reading: John 13: 4-15<br><br>As you listen to the reading of this scripture - put yourself in the place of Jesus – what does it feel like for you? Put yourself in the place of one of the disciples – how are you feeling?<br>Put yourself in the place of Simon Peter – now as Peter - how are you feeling?<br><br>John 13: 4-10<br><i>...He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him. ‘Master, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus answered and said to him. ‘What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.’ Peter said to him, ‘You will never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me. Simon Peter said to him, ‘Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so, you are clean, but not all.’ For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’</i><br><i>So, when he had washed their feet [and] put his garment back on and reclined at table again, he said to them.’ Do you realise what I have done to you? You call me teacher and master and rightly so, for indeed I am. If therefore, the master and teacher, has washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.’</i> | Leader read the scripture.<br><br>If the group is large enough, invite some to ponder from the perspective of Jesus, some from the disciples’ perspective and other to think from Peter’s point of view. |

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| Setting the Scene<br>5 min  | Leader - through conversation we will explore understandings of Servant Leadership and how this informs leadership in our context...  |   |
| 3 min                       | View: What is Servant Leadership? YouTube - October 14, 2016.<br>Link provided. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKk0AaaFqtU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKk0AaaFqtU</a><br><br>Suggest people list the key points for themselves. | This is a brief animated introduction to Servant Leadership |
| 10 min                      | Resource 1<br>Invite all participants to read and reflect on the hand-out as provided.<br><br>How does each extract speak to you about leadership?  |   |
| 15 min                      | Group Sharing and reflections related to the readings.<br><br>At the end of the sharing –<br>What is the key 'takeaways' about Servant Leadership?  |   |
| Concluding comment<br>5 min | Leader:<br><b><i>Invite participants to sit quietly for a couple of minutes: Ponder their experiences of Service and Servant Leadership and how collectively this contributes to your college mission and culture.</i></b>                      |   |

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| Reference Material:  |
| Bible<br>Servant Leadership YouTube link<br>Servant Leadership hand-out. |

## RESOURCE 1

### **SERVANT LEADERSHIP - How do we understand this in our Mary Aikenhead Ministries context today?**

While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase “servant leadership” was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, Greenleaf said: “The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions... The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

“The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? “

A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

Robert Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership Website

In working with many people in different cultures, I have learned to define leadership differently than most. A leader is anyone willing to help, anyone who sees something that needs to change and takes the first steps to influence that situation. It might be a parent who intervenes in her child’s school, or a worker who refuses to allow mistreatment of others in his workplace, or a citizen who rallies her neighbours to stop local polluters. Everywhere in the world, no matter the economic or social circumstances, people step forward to try and make a small difference.

Because a leader is anyone willing to help, we can celebrate the fact that the world is abundantly rich in leaders. Some people ask, ‘Where have all the leaders gone?’ But if we worry that there is a shortage of leaders, we are just looking in the wrong place, usually at the top of the same hierarchy. Instead, we need to look around us, to look locally. And we need to look at ourselves. When have we moved into action for an issue or concern that we cared about? When have we stepped forward to help and thereby become a leader?

Turning to one another: Margaret J. Wheatley

The hard truth is that it is not possible to experience the rewards and joy of leadership without experiencing the pain as well...

The most difficult work of leadership involves learning to experience distress without numbing yourself. The virtue of a sacred heart lies in the courage to maintain your innocence and wonder, your doubt and curiosity, and your compassion and love even through your darkest, most difficult moments. Leading with an open heart means you could be at your lowest point, abandoned by your people and entirely powerless, yet remain receptive to the full range of human emotions without going numb, striking back, or engaging in some other defence. In one moment, you may experience total despair, but in the next, compassion and forgiveness. You may even experience such vicissitudes in the same moment and hold those inconsistent feelings in tension with one another. Maybe you have. A sacred heart allows you to feel, hear, and diagnose, even in the midst of your mission, so that you can accurately gauge different situations appropriately...

Without keeping your heart open, it becomes difficult, perhaps impossible to fashion the right response and to succeed or come out whole.

Leadership on the Line: Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky.

If Francis's focus on the least fortunate in society was not clear to everyone with his first acts and decisions, there was little ambiguity remaining after he delivered his first homily at the inaugural mass six days after becoming pope on March 19, 2013. Pope Francis proclaimed:

*'Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope, too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service... He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete, and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all God's people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. Only those who serve with love are able to protect!'*

Lead with Humility, 12 Leadership Lessons from Pope Francis: Jeffry A. Krames

Archbishop Daniel Murray chose Mary Aikenhead (1787-1858). Born in Cork, she had been brought up in the Church of Ireland but became a Catholic when fifteen. She ran the family home for some years during her mother's sickness, caring for two younger sisters and a brother. When she judged family finances secure, she agreed to Murray's plan....

Concerned with the impact of unemployment, Aikenhead's 1833 Letter to the Commissioners implied damage done to Irish trade by the 1800 Act of Union with England, which Aikenhead knew from what happened to her mother's relations. ...

Aikenhead described men living for *'forty-eight hours on one meal, without sufficient clothes to cover them, their wretched furniture and tattered garments being pledged as a last resort.'* She stated that there was no dispensary at Sandymount, and the poor had *'no other medical aid'* than what people like the Sisters of Charity could offer. ...

Having described the kind of people the Irish Sisters dealt with, Aikenhead's letter to the Commissioners ended by offering the help of the Sisters of Charity, wherever they were, in alleviating *the 'sufferings of our fellow creatures of every creed.'*

A Cause of Trouble: M.M.K. O'Sullivan (Moira RSC)

Mary Aikenhead's Chapel, Harold's Cross Dublin: note the sculpture selected: Christ Washing the Feet of disciple. **What does this suggest to you about Mary Aikenhead and leadership?**

