

Stepping forward in Leadership in the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community
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It is a hallmark of our age that everyone is looking for leaders and usually can't find them. This is true in politics, education, the business world and the Church. Why are people reluctant to be leaders? Are the risks of leadership somehow seen as less than the rewards? In our Carmelite Communities the risks are fewer and the rewards are greater because we perform our duties within the Rule and with confidence in the charity of our spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ.

Leadership is an activity that each of us accepts at certain points in our lives, and it doesn't mean that some people are leaders and some aren't. This view is possible if we put aside the worries and self-concern about leadership and concentrate on the fundamental requirement for accepting leadership duties, which is humility. There has never been a better time to step forward and help the Community through your talents.

As our spiritual parents Saint Teresa and Saint John teach us humility is the glue which holds the virtues and contemplative experiences together. And we know from our own personal experiences, humility binds our promises of chastity, poverty and obedience together so that our actions out of contemplation are simply and profoundly NOT for our own self interest but for Christ and our fellow Carmelites. If humility is the spirit of leadership, then what are the practical actions?

First, self knowledge: am I in a good place to practice leadership activities in my community? Do I have time, and am I free of personal interest and ambition that would lead me astray by thinking I know what is best for my brothers and sisters in Carmel? Am I focused on the Constitutions and particularly on utilizing their guidance in a spirit of charity and love to each of my brothers and sisters. Can I exercise responsibility and duty with common sense and charity? The reward of accepting leadership will be increased self knowledge and greater awareness of the real needs of my companions on our spiritual journey.

Second, do I want to serve more than I am serving now - not in an ego-centric way, but in whatever way the Council deems appropriate. When I bring this to prayer, do I gain confidence that my desire to practice leadership is what God wants of me? Can I devote myself to learning something new in the way I practice leadership and serve others? The reward will be new skills in how I live my life and how I make decisions.

Third, can I be courageous when necessary? My beloved brothers and sisters in Carmel will not always agree with my decisions or my actions. In truth and humility I must accept their views, but also do what is right and obedient to my calling and my leadership duties. Can I do this at this point in my life? The reward will be a self confidence based on my real talents, exercised through serving God and the Community.

Finally, if I accept a leadership position and then find that the leadership role is too challenging for me, will I be able to ask for the help that I need through grace and genuine humility.

Now is the time to step forward and offer your talents to your Community, in humility as a leader and for the welfare of your sisters and brothers. The reward will be a stronger sense of who you are as a Carmelite. You will be able to bring to your prayer a renewed confidence in yourself and love for our Lord.