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St. Josemaria on Virtues of Leaders

"Leadership Wisdom" in the writings of St. Josemaria which can be useful for anyone in authority: business executives, government officials, parents, and teachers.

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A good number of those who have been declared saints or canonized in the Catholic Church demonstrated outstanding qualities of leaders. A most recent example is St. Josemaria Escriva, Founder of Opus Dei. Thanks

to Dr. Raul Nidoy, a top official of the Parents for Education Foundation (PAREF), business executives can learn from St. Josemaria what are the virtues of leaders in modern times. Dr. Nidoy extracted these virtues from the abundant writings of St. Josemaria, some of them best sellers that have sold millions of copies in numerous languages all over the world. Let me summarize these leadership qualities below as can be gleaned from pronouncements of St. Josemaria:

Understanding: an effective help. I think it is very good that you should try daily to increase the depth of your concern for those under you. For to feel surrounded and protected by the affectionate understanding of the one in charge can be the effective help which is needed by the people you have to serve by means of your governance.

Charity: do not terrorize. The good shepherd does not have to fill the sheep with fear. Such behaviour befits bad rulers, and no one is very much surprised if they end up hated and isolated. When you are dealing with problems, try not to exaggerate justice to the point of forgetting charity.

Good manners of service. Authority does not consist in the one above yelling at the one below, and the latter in turn at the one further down. In such a way of behaving—a caricature of authority—apart from an evident lack of charity and of decent human standards, all that is achieved is that the one at the top becomes isolated from those who are governed, because he does not serve them. Rather it could be said that he uses them!

Humility to learn from others. But... do you really think you know it all

just because you have been placed in authority? Listen carefully: the good ruler knows that he can, that he should, learn from others.

Study: non-biased. How sad it is to see some people in positions of authority speaking and making judgements lightly, without studying the matter in hand. They make hard statements about persons or matters they know nothing about, even permitting certain prejudices which are the result of disloyalty!

Know how to obey. When you are told what to do, let no one know how to obey better than you; whether it is hot or cold, whether you feel keen or are tired, whether you are young or less so, it makes no difference.

Someone who "does not know how to obey" will never learn to command.

Responsibility. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Not ignoring problems. You must not solve problems, your own or those of others, by ignoring them; this would be nothing short of laziness and comfort-seeking, which would open the door to the action of the devil.

Fortitude to correct. There is a great love of comfort, and at times a great irresponsibility, hidden behind the attitude of those in authority who flee from the sorrow of correcting, giving the excuse that they want to avoid the suffering of others.

Anyone who has read one or more of the biographies of St. Josemaria can easily confirm that this "Saint Ordinary Life," as St. John Paul the Great called him, practised what he preached. As one of those who started the apostolate of Opus Dei in the Philippines in 1964, I can attest to the sterling qualities of leadership that St. Josemaria lived in guiding the growth and expansion of the Work in

these islands and in the rest of Asia until he went to heaven on June 26, 1975. I only hope and pray that those of us who are children of his spirit will know how to pass on the lessons we learned from him to the future generations of the faithful of the Prelature.

Leadership according to St. Josemaria

Manila Bulletin, April 16, 2015

Thanks to Dr. Raul Nidoy, one of the top officials of the Parents for Education Foundation (PAREF), we can learn from St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, about how to be effective leaders in modern times.

Dr. Nidoy extracted from the abundant writings of St. Josemaria "leadership wisdom" which can be useful for anyone in authority: business executives, government

officials, parents, and teachers. The following are the characteristics of effective leadership according to St. Josemaria:

Making others great. Mediocre men, mediocre in mind and in Christian spirit, surround themselves with stupid people when they are in power. They are falsely persuaded by their vanity that in this way they will never lose control. Sensible men, however, surround themselves with learned people who live a clean life as well as possessing knowledge, and can become, through their help, men who know how to really govern. They are not in this matter deceived by their humility, for in making others great they themselves are made great.

Filling the training gaps. Don't get annoyed. Irresponsible behaviour often denotes poor formation or a lack of intelligence rather than want

of good spirit. Teachers and directors should be expected to fill in those gaps with the responsible fulfilment of their duties.

Delegating responsibility. Ask for an account. A fundamental rule for good management is to give responsibility to others without this becoming for you a way of seeking anonymity or comfort. I repeat, delegate responsibility and ask each person to give an account of how his job is going, so that you can “render an account” to God; and to souls, if necessary.

The best is the enemy of the good. People have to be taught how to work, but their preparation need not be overdone, for actually doing things is a way of learning too. They should accept in advance their unavoidable shortcomings—the best is the enemy of the good.

Demanding with affection and flexibility. Governing often consists in knowing how to draw good out of people, with patience and affection. Good governance knows how to be flexible when necessary, without falling into the error of not asking enough of people.

Practicing collegial leadership. Decisions of governance taken lightly or by someone on his own are always, or nearly always, influenced by a one-sided view of the problems. However good your training or talents might be, you must listen to those who share with you that task of direction.

Not becoming indispensable. When you are not around, other people should be able to go ahead with the work you have in hand, thanks to the experience you have generously passed on to them and to your not having made yourself indispensable.

Seeing the positive too. Try to be properly objective in your work of governance. Avoid the inclination common to those who tend to see rather—and sometime only—what is not going well, the mistakes.

St. Josemaria, who practiced all human and supernatural virtues heroically, excelled as a leader of men and women. I am fortunate to have benefited personally from the outstanding example of his leadership qualities. Among many other institutions, the Center for Research and Communication that later became the University of Asia and the Pacific, would not be what it is today without all the prodding, training, delegating, affection, and encouragement that those of us who started this educational endeavour received from St. Josemaria from 1964 to the day that he went to heaven on June 26, 1975.

Bernardo Villegas

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