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**Towards a Synodal Model of Leadership: Insights from John's Gospel**  
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**Introduction**

Any biblical or theological reflection on leadership presupposes a context and is conditioned to a certain extent, by that context. Today, we shall keep in mind (i) the global Covid-19 pandemic that forced us to make radical changes in our way of life as well as (ii) the synodal process initiated by Pope Francis for the whole Church. It is in these global and ecclesial contexts that we reflect on Johannine leadership for our times.

There are different models of leadership in the Bible – charismatic, prophetic, administrative, transformative, appreciative, servant model, shepherd model, kingship model. Each type has both advantages and disadvantages. The type that is best suited to a particular group will vary according to time, place, and circumstances. We must ask ourselves: what kind of leadership is the best for us in the present context?

The Gospel of John has a unique way of understanding the Church and offers a distinct style of leadership. I am very happy to explore this theme with you. I shall first explore briefly the Johannine ecclesiology. I shall then examine the Johannine leadership paradigms in chapters 10, 13, and 21. Lastly, I shall present the Johannine paradigm of leadership emerging from the above analysis and its implications and challenges for us.

**I. The Johannine Ecclesiology**

In John's Gospel, all believers are primarily children of God, those who are born of God, and thus share in the life of God (1: 12-13). The Fourth Evangelist speaks of the Christian community in terms of a flock that hears the voice of the Shepherd, knows him and follows him (John 10). Later the Evangelist introduces another metaphor: The Vine and its branches. Jesus is the Vine and the believers are its branches. So, the Church is perceived as a community attached to Jesus, abiding in Jesus and bearing fruit (John 15). Jesus also refers to the "other sheep that are not of this fold", meaning those who are not Jews (10:16). Hence, Jesus includes everybody who believes in him whether they are Jews (2—3) or Samaritans (4:1-42), Romans (4:45-54), Greeks (12:20) or Gentiles in general (17:20). Jesus later calls his disciples his friends, and it is imperative for the friends of Jesus to keep the commandments (15:14) and to love one another (13:34-35).

In the Johannine understanding of the Christian community, all members are God's children and friends of Jesus. All believers are sheep of his flock and branches of his vine; there is no place for superiority or hierarchy among them. The only distinction that can be made is between the sheep who listen to the voice of Jesus and follow, and those who do not, or the branches that bear fruit and those who do not. The superiority or authority consists in the primacy of revealing God's nature and goodness or in the primacy of witness by loving one

another and keeping God's commandments or in the primacy of bearing fruit by doing the will of God as the chosen people of God. What distinguishes one member from the other is the quality of life and commitment as disciples of Jesus. John's Gospel does not seem to support any hierarchical structure within Christian communities. The primacy of power and domination are thus foreign to the Johannine ecclesial communities. As we shall see, the power of love takes precedence over all other forms of power, and authority is exercised at the service of life.

## II. The Johannine Jesus and Leadership Paradigms

When we look for leadership models in John's Gospel, three texts stand out: the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10, the foot-washing scene in John 13, and the commissioning of Peter as Shepherd of the community in John 21. Unfortunately, traditional interpretations of these texts do not always highlight the unique Johannine insights on leadership imbedded in them. I invite you to look at these texts from a new perspective, in conformity with Johannine theology and spirituality.

### a. Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10)<sup>1</sup>

The Johannine Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd who has come to give life in abundance and who lays down his life for the sheep (10:10-11). The Evangelist makes the distinction between Jesus and the false shepherds. Jesus is presented as the Good Shepherd who enters through the door as opposed to climbing over the fence (10:1-2), who gives life in abundance as opposed to stealing, killing and destroying (10:10), who lays down his life as opposed to leaving the sheep and fleeing (10:11-12), who knows the sheep as opposed to being a stranger (10:14). The Good Shepherd exercises his authority for the welfare of the sheep and is ready to give up his life, while the 'thieves' and 'robbers' think of their own profit and security. What gives Jesus the authority to be the Shepherd is the love of the Father and his love for the sheep (10:17).

In the second part of the narrative, Jesus defends himself as the Good Shepherd by quoting Psalm 82 (10:34).<sup>2</sup> In Ps 82 the rulers (gods) are judged by Almighty God for their oppression of the weak and the orphans and for their indifference towards human suffering (Ps 82:3-4). The gods are accused of walking in darkness (Ps 82:5). The maltreatment of the poor and the downtrodden, the lowly and the powerless, is a matter of life and death to the gods. Injustice shakes the very foundations of the cosmos (the universe) and thus the world threatens to fall into chaos (Ps 82:5).<sup>3</sup> In other words, the gods are judged because they are not doing the will of God.<sup>4</sup> Injustice of the leaders thus threatens the integrity of the entire creation. God's

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed study of John 10, see Rekha M. Chennattu, "The Good Shepherd (Jn 10): A Political Perspective," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 1:1 (1998): 93-105.

<sup>2</sup> The use of Ps 82 in the Good Shepherd discourse gives us a further clue to understanding the meaning and implication of the text. For a short survey of the research done on the interpretation of Ps 82,6-7 in relation to Jn 10, 34-36, see A. T. Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII Reconsidered," *NTS* 13 (1966-67), pp. 363-367. There are many who consider Psalm 82 as a social critique of the rulers in the 8th century BCE. For this interpretation, see H. Niehr, "Götter oder Menschen - eine falsche Alternative: Bemerkungen zu Ps 82," *ZAW99* (1987), pp. 94-98.

<sup>3</sup> For this interpretation, see H. Niehr, "Götter oder Menschen - eine falsche Alternative: Bemerkungen zu Ps 82," *ZAW99* (1987), 94-98.

<sup>4</sup> The Jewish state being theocratic, the *rulers* of the people of Israel take the place of Yahweh who favours the poor and the oppressed, and they are expected to do the same.

radical and universal concern for justice is very conspicuous in this psalm, which articulates God's will. In contrast to the rulers or the gods who are judged by God, Jesus, throughout the Gospel of John, goes on affirming that he does the will of his Father, and thus reveals his identity as the true Son of God and the Good Shepherd. Moreover, Jesus continues his defence by announcing that he has been consecrated and sent by the Father (Jn 10:36). The divine consecration of Jesus would imply that he is totally set apart for the works of God. The intimate union between the Father and Jesus makes him unique: "The Father and I are one." (Jn 10:30).

The authority of the Good Shepherd consists in his power to give life: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (10:10) and in his power of love and sacrifice: "I lay down my life for the sheep" (10: 11). The life-giving and self-sacrificing attitude of the Good Shepherd presupposes a personal experience of God's love, deep communion and constant communication with God: "the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10:38). By referring to Psalm 82, the discourse defines the mission of the Shepherd or God's will as a radical and universal concern for life, justice and the integrity of creation, fostering the growth and well-being of all the living.

#### **b. Jesus and the Foot-washing Scene (13)<sup>5</sup>**

Jesus, our Lord and master, washed the feet of his disciples. How do we understand the symbolic action of Jesus? Jesus does the work of a slave and gives us an example of humility and humble service, which disciples are called to imitate. This traditional interpretation of the story highlights the servant model of leadership which is in line with the synoptic traditions (cf. Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-27) and Pauline spirituality of the suffering servant (cf. Phil 2:5-11). The foot-washing scene is found only in John's Gospel and is a symbolic presentation of Jesus' death on the cross. In the Synoptic Gospels, we have the Eucharistic texts of the Last Supper whose meaning and significance are also located in Jesus' death on the cross.<sup>6</sup> The servant model or the suffering servant model of leadership does not do full justice to the Johannine Christology, which presents Jesus' death on the cross as glorification or the most powerful revelation of God's love.

Sandra Schneiders rightly proposed the dialogue between Jesus and Peter as the hermeneutical key to understanding this symbolic action (Jn 13:6-9).<sup>7</sup> She interpreted this scene by examining the dynamics of the relationship between the ones serving and the ones receiving the service in daily life. One can imagine three possible service-scenarios. The first model is the service rendered by the poor to the rich. Here we have the example of a forced service for the survival of the poor and the relationship among them manifests dependence, domination and inequality. The second model is the service rendered by the rich to the poor or by teachers to students, etc. In this model, there may not be domination, but there is still inequality and dependence. Peter's response is indicative of this model. The third model is

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<sup>5</sup> Rekha M. Chennattu, "Towards a Covenant Model of Leadership: An Interpretation of John 13," *Jeevadhara XLII/248* (2012): 133-45.

<sup>6</sup> As Sandra Schneiders rightly pointed out "both the action over the bread and wine and the foot washing serve as prophetic gestures revealing the true significance of the death of Jesus within the theological perspectives of the respective Evangelists" (see Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics," *CBQ* 43 [1981] 81. n. 22).

<sup>7</sup> Schneiders, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 76-92.

the service rendered among friends as an expression of love, which celebrates equality and evokes reciprocity. The question therefore is: which model of service is implied by Jesus when he washed the feet of his disciples? If we follow the first model, Peter should actually wash his master's feet. Peter is refusing to be washed by Jesus because this reversal of roles is not acceptable to him (13:6-8a). Peter did not understand the significance of Jesus' prophetic action. In the original Greek, Peter's expression "you will never wash" is used with double negative particles for emphasis (13:8a): "By no means you wash my feet ever (unto eternity)". The response of Jesus to Peter, "if I don't wash you, you have no share (*μέρος* [*meros*] = inheritance, partnership, eternal life) with me" (13:8b), is shocking. How can Jesus deny eternal life to Peter just because he refused to be the recipient of Jesus' lowly service? So, it is clear that Jesus is not referring to the refusal of a menial service, but something more significant than a humble service as the foot-washing enabled the disciples to share the *meros* or eternal life with Jesus.

There are at least three meanings associated with the ritual of "washing" in the Old Testament. (i) Washing is a gesture of hospitality. When the Lord appeared to Abraham, he said: "let a little water be brought and let me wash your feet" (Gen 18:4). (ii) The ritual of washing was a sign of purification and preparation to meet God: "Israel washed their hands and feet before they went into the tent of meeting – lest they die" (Exod 30:21). (iii) Washing is closely associated with the new life and renewed covenant relationship with Yahweh (Ezk 36:25-28). The prophet Ezekiel underlined three things as signs of the eschatological time: the washing of the people in clean water, the outpouring of the Spirit and the observance of the Law. These signs signal the inauguration of the new age to come and renew their covenant relationship with God. And these three things are symbolically fulfilled in succession in the Chapters 13, 14, and 15 of the Gospel of John.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, by washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus is symbolically welcoming the disciples to a new covenant community of friends.

Jesus invited his disciples to do the same – wash one another's feet [not the feet of their disciples]. The Johannine Jesus thus repudiates any form of authority that treats others as subjects and calls his disciples friends, but with one condition, "You are my friends, if you do what I command you" (15:14). So, it is clear that Jesus is not talking about some sentimental or emotional friendship but a covenant-model of friendship in which God's command (God's will) takes priority over other things. Moreover, it does not deny the unique role and mission of Jesus as the Teacher and Lord: "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am" (13:13). When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as his friends, he welcomed the disciples to the new covenant community. Jesus inaugurated a new community of disciples in which all members relate to one another as friends and covenant partners of God. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that John 13 promotes a synodal way of leadership that fosters inter-dependence, reciprocity and co-responsibility.

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<sup>8</sup> See the detailed discussion in Rekha Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) and Rekha Chennattu, "Towards a Covenant Model of Leadership: An Interpretation of John 13," *Jeevadhara* XLII/248 (2012): 133-45.

**c. Jesus and Peter in John 21**

A third account that unveils Johannine leadership is the commissioning of Simon Peter as the Shepherd of the community in John 21: 15-23.<sup>9</sup> This narrative is very closely linked to both the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10 and the foot-washing event in John 13. While the theme of shepherding connects chapter 10 to chapter 21, the context of a shared meal brings chapters 13 and 21 together. The narrator resumes the meal motif by deliberately indicating the time of the dialogue between the risen Lord and Peter, “when they had finished breakfast” (21:15a). The foot-washing event takes place during a meal shared before Jesus’ death and the commissioning of Peter takes place in the context of a meal after Jesus’ death and resurrection. A shared meal plays an important role in the context of making a covenant in the Old Testament (Gen 26:26-30; 31:43-54; Exod 24:5-11; Deut 27:6-7).<sup>10</sup> Shared meals deepen friendship bonds, mutual knowledge and trust, and commitment to one another in the community.

It is in this context of a meal, symbolizing their mutually binding relationship, that Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loves him: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” (21:15-17). As I have argued elsewhere, what determines the meaning of Jesus’ query is the phrase, “more than these”. The context and grammar allow two meanings of the clause under discussion, “do you love me more than these?” (21:15): (i) Do you love me more than these [disciples] love me?<sup>11</sup> or (ii) Do you love me more than you love these things? The comparison seems to be between the objects of Peter’s love: “me” and “these” rather than Peter’s love and other disciples’ love for Jesus.<sup>12</sup> The second reading of the clause reminds the readers of the absolute claim that the covenant God makes in the OT when he gives the command to love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). The risen Lord is asking Peter whether his love for him is absolute, definitive, and conclusive.

The threefold repetition of the question and the response communicate a progression in the dialogue and stress the importance and the significance of the event: the appointment of Peter as the Shepherd and his commitment to the new covenant community. One may also suggest different understandings of “these” as it can refer to people, things and actions: (i) Do you love me more than others? (ii) Do you love me more than these material things? (iii) Do you love me more than your ministries/functions? The risen Lord, like the covenant God, demands from Peter, the shepherd of the community, precedence, primacy and absolute loyalty to God in his relationship with God.

The repeated responses of Peter, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you” (21:15b), seem to imply that Peter loves Jesus more than anything else. Peter’s affirmative response is followed by the command to feed Jesus’ lambs (21:15c). Peter’s confirmation of his love with Jesus’ subsequent commission to feed/tend his lambs/sheep combines the covenant-discipleship motifs of loving God with obeying the commandments (14:15; 15:10). The climax of the dialogue between Peter and Jesus reveals the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God (21:18). The destiny of Peter

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<sup>9</sup> Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship*, 173-79.

<sup>10</sup> Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship*, 89-91.

<sup>11</sup> For the arguments in favor of this view, see Barrett, *John*, 584; Carson, *John*, 677. The passages (13:8, 37-38; 18:10, 15-18), used by Barrett (*John*, 584) to support the claim that Peter loves Jesus in a superior way, are not convincing enough to claim a greater love on the part of Peter.

<sup>12</sup> R. Hanna supports this view on grammatical grounds as he holds, “If ‘more than these do’ would have been the desired translation, the pronoun οὐ would have been included” (*A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983] 185).

as a martyr signifies the deepest level of discipleship and commitment to the commandment of love (15:12-14). The command to follow Jesus in 21:19 ("follow me") indicates that the radical call to following in discipleship unto death is modelled on Jesus. In sum, the commission of Peter as the shepherd is grounded on his unconditional love and obedience to God's commands, and it is modelled after the life and mission of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and lays down his life for the sheep.

### **III. The Johannine Model of Leadership and Its Implications and Challenges**

In light of the above discussion on Johannine community and Johannine leadership, one can reasonably conclude that Jesus inaugurated a "new covenant community" characterized by universal discipleship of equals and participative leadership ("washing one another's feet"), which values the other as friend and covenant partner, fosters inter-dependence and calls for shared responsibility. Peter is commissioned by the risen Lord as the shepherd of the community. The evangelist presents the shepherding ministry of Peter as a command to be obeyed as a manifestation of his unconditional love for the risen Lord. Leaders are commissioned to participate in God's work by obeying God's command and fulfilling God's will. Therefore, leaders should enter into a never-ending process of discerning together God's will for our changing times. As we shall see, this Johannine covenant-friendship paradigm of leadership promotes a synodal Church in general and synodal religious congregations in particular.

#### **a. A Theological Paradigm of Johannine Leadership**

The theological elements of leadership emerging from the above analysis of John 10, John 13, John 15, and John 21 can be summarised as follows [this list is not exhaustive]:<sup>13</sup>

1. All believers are called to become God's children, Jesus' friends, and covenant partners in God's mission. Jesus is the Vine and the disciples are all branches (John 15). Abiding in God's love, and discerning and fulfilling God's will is mandatory for both discipleship and leadership (John 10; John 13; John 15; John 21). A synodal process is thus implied here as both disciples and shepherds share in the life of God and in the mission of God. The discernment of God's project or God's will has to be made together and each member is responsible for its accomplishment.
2. God's love is the heart of Johannine leadership. Loving God in return more than everything else – oneself, others, material things, ministry, and functional roles – is the requirement to be commissioned by God ("Do you love me more than these?" John 21). An experience of God's love manifesting itself in the whole hearted commitment to God's project is the foundation of leadership in John's Gospel.

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<sup>13</sup> See also Rekha M Chennattu, "To Be Rooted and Relevant: A Call for a Paradigm Shift in the Life of Women Religious," *UISG Bulletin* 142 (2010): 47-61; « Enracinée et Pertinente: Un Appel à Changer le Paradigme de la Vie Religieuse Féminine, » *Bulletin UISG* 142 (2010): 46-61; "Una Spiritualità Radicata e Attuale per un Cambiamento di Paradigma nella Vita Religiosa Femminile," *Bollettino UISG* 142 (2010): 47-61; "Enraizadas y Pertinentes: Un Llamado a Cambiar el Paradigma de la Vida Religiosa Femenina," *Boletín UISG* 142 (2010): 46-60.

3. Shepherds or leaders/animators are chosen, consecrated and sent by God (John 10; John 21; see also 20:19-23). As consecrated and sent by the Father (10:36; 21:15-19; see also 17: 17-19), the leaders participate in the work of God which would imply joyful detachment from the idea of accomplishing one's own mission and total commitment to the mission of God.
4. The mission of the shepherd or the leader is to give life in abundance (10:10) by building up communities, ensuring justice, equity, peace, and the integrity of creation (10:34; Ps 82). No one is excluded, especially the poor and less privileged ones. If not, our leadership leads to the destruction of the entire universe (Ps 82). A synodal leadership is the only way forward.
5. Leadership implies mutual knowledge and personal relationship – "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14) which includes attentive listening, the respect for and acceptance of each one's unique role in the mission of God (John 21). Leadership is defined as a reciprocal service to one another as friends and covenant partners, and it is therefore participatory. We are invited:
  - a. to know one another (John 10:14)
  - b. to wash one another's feet (John 13:14)
  - c. to love one another (John 13: 34; 15:12. 17)
6. Jesus leads the disciple by his life and example ("as I have done") (John 13:15, 34-35; 15: 12; 21:19). Jesus invites the disciples to lead the people as he himself has done. Leaders are thus called to lead by example and by the power and wisdom of God's abiding word.
7. Johannine leadership consists in the power of love and demands a loving service unto death – laying down one's life for her/his friends or covenant partners in the community (John 10:11. 15. 17; 15:13; 21:18-19). It implies sacrifices and participation in the paschal mystery of Christ – in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**b. Some Practical Implications and Challenges based on Personal Experiences**

1. The Johannine covenant-friendship model of leadership promotes both greater participation and shared responsibility and it is in conformity with the spirituality of synodality. In the words of Pope Francis: "The journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from his Church in the third millennium. ... it is to walk together, to be together on the way of faith and that concerns everybody. ... but it does not take away the difference of function and ministry and roles."<sup>14</sup> In the context of our congregations, synodality includes all the professed members of the congregation taking responsibility for its life and mission for our times.

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis said at the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Paul VI's establishment of the synod of Bishops in October 2015 (<https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2018/synods-words-on-synodal-church-puzzle-some-people.cfm>). See also the document published by the International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (Vatican: 2018). See also the Preparatory Document – *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission* (2021).

2. The covenant-friendship model of animation is not hierarchical, but reciprocal. It does not mean that all will have the same role to play in the community. On the contrary, it implies respect and acceptance of each one as different and each one's role as unique in the community. We understand equality here not as uniformity, but as equity, which by nature promotes diversity and plurality. Very often we forget this reciprocal or "one another" aspect and collective responsibility. It is a reciprocal animation in which each one has something to hear, something to offer, something to learn and something to achieve, always in favour of what is discerned as the choices of God. This model tries to take into consideration both individual talents and interests as well as our common charism and mission.
3. Johannine leadership is possible only when we (both leaders and followers) have achieved inner freedom. It can work only when we are mature, free, secure and balanced persons. Inner freedom refers to freedom from within which no one else can give or destroy. It is an inner disposition – the way we see and interpret things, and the way we relate with one another and the way we respond to different situations, both simple and complex. Self-awareness and mindfulness are the keys to this interior freedom. God's grace is always there, but we need to remain open to receive it.
4. In this paradigm, authority consists in the POWER of love and sacrifice and we can animate a community:
  - a. when we strive to have selfless love for all the members of the community;
  - b. when we have genuine concern for the common good;
  - c. when we have our eyes fixed on God's project.
5. We can become "leaders" when we possess authenticity and integrity. We earn respect and exercise authority:
  - a. when we establish credibility with people by demonstrating our intention to do the right thing and making clear our efforts to practise what we preach (character);
  - b. when we show that we are capable of getting things done (competence);
  - c. when we are able to inspire and mobilize the group towards the common mission (charism or spiritual power).
6. With this leadership model, we will find ourselves always in a "win-win situation". Our goal is to win over everyone and to ensure fullness of life for all. There is a unique place for each one, and a special role to be played by each one in the realization of the common goal. It requires attentive and contemplative listening which transforms the one who is speaking and the one who is listening. According to Pope Francis, this mutual listening is a mandatory step on a synodal journey.
7. Each one is called to a "continual conversion of heart" as many sacrifices will have to be made for the sake of the common good. This leadership is not easy as it involves an experience of "dying" on a daily basis. But the more we practise the covenant-friendship model of leadership in our congregations, the more animation becomes an experience of grace and wellness for all members.



Having made this list, I must confess that we need to be realistic and keep in mind that this covenant-friendship model of animation is both an ideal and a process. We are engaged in the process of becoming leaders as covenant partners. No one possesses all the qualities I have enumerated, but the constant effort on the part of all, leaders and members, makes this journey possible.

### **Conclusion**

We need forward-looking, optimistic, daring and committed leaders who are open to offer and receive in the process of discerning the will of God. The well-being of each member as well as the common good of the entire community determine the choices and decisions. The Johannine model creates a sense of community of equals and friends, and invites all to contribute their abilities and talents, which will complement each other. In such an atmosphere, relationships are mutual and collaborative rather than hierarchical. What is unique to John's Gospel is the aspect of reciprocity in leadership roles: "one another" as friends or covenant partners. This is the synodal way.

In this synodal model of leadership, each member has a different role and a different function in the building up of the community, but these different roles or functions are not equated with superiority or inferiority. It fosters a style of leadership at the service of life, characterized by an ongoing discernment of God's will, attentive listening, loving service, radical inclusion, greater participation and fairness, transparency coupled with confidentiality, and shared responsibility. Far from insisting on conformity to one or the other set pattern, it encourages diversity and promotes creative ways of responding to the challenges of our times.

Being consecrated and sent by God, the leader will receive the grace of God to inspire all members to live the charism in its fulness and to accomplish its mission with zeal and hope for a better world. The mission of leadership, in place of control from above, consists in the "power of love" that inspires synodality. Leadership then becomes an animation from within to build up an egalitarian community of covenant partners and friends that upholds equity, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.