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He joined the Franciscans in 2005 and was solemnly professed in August 2010 and ordained to the priesthood in May 2011.

While at a parish in Hartford, CT, he was engaged in hospital chaplaincy and also supervised activities between St. Patrick-St. Anthony parish and their sister parish in Haiti.

During that time, he also began ministry with the OFS.

He has been a Spiritual Assistant on the local and regional levels – currently the Regional SA for Solanus Casey region, and has since been appointed Provincial Spiritual Assistant for his province. He lives in Boston, at St Anthony Shrine.

Good afternoon, everyone. It is great being among you once again. The last time I saw many of you was at the “Q”. Wasn’t that a great experience? Thank you for your invitation to speak on Franciscan Servant Leadership (FSL).

Good leadership is a difficult thing to come by these days. As you know, there are born leaders and those who become good leaders while learning on the job. That is usually the case with us.

In our search for leaders, we search for and expect a certain type of leader. We look for potential leaders, who are extensions of the Gospel; who are examples of the way Jesus led through service; who embody the Franciscan charism of respect for all ...a person who can reconcile and not divide.

FSL AS AN EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL

Our first glimpse of servant leadership comes from Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 20 verse 27: “And whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

From the very beginning, Jesus puts himself and his needs second, to those he has come to serve. For him, the most important thing was, to do the will of his Father.

His ministry was to preach the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom.

He was to preach the love of God for all people. His ministry was also to reconcile all people to God, through his passion, death and resurrection.

There was, no room in Jesus’ idea of leadership, for his own personal exercise of power and dominance over peoples’ lives.

A Franciscan Servant Leader, will model his or her leadership, on the Gospel. Their style of leadership, will first and foremost, show the ones they serve, that they are loved by God. They are important in God’s sight.

Their style of servant leadership will show that, the Kingdom of God is present in their midst –

especially in the presence of the brothers and sisters in fraternity and the marginalized.

The Gospel is the story of God's love and presence among us. If a FSL is not getting that across and is only concerned with making sure that all rules are followed and forms filled out correctly, but does not show loving concern and understanding as Jesus did, he or she needs to look at their style of leadership as a Franciscan. This brings me to our next point ...

FSL AS AN EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

A FSL is an extension of Jesus Christ. There are certain characteristics of Jesus that a FSL should strive to possess.

Michael Krauszer is the owner and founder of the Christian Literature Review. He has mentioned some of these characteristics, and perhaps, we could come up with some of our own. Here are a few that he mentions:

1) Jesus was **COMPASSIONATE**. Whenever people were around him, Jesus understood what their real needs were, and addressed them. For some, physical healing was necessary, for others the root issue was spiritual. In all cases though, Jesus took the time to actually notice that people were hurting-and His compassion drove Him to help them. His compassion renewed them.

2) Jesus was a **SERVANT**. He made sure to teach his disciples to be servants, by actually **BEING** a servant himself. Despite having the authority to get anything He wanted, to have people praise and pamper him, He did the exact opposite. He lowered himself and served others.

3) Jesus was **LOVING**. Jesus loved people because he loved the Father and knew him intimately. As God incarnate, his love was out there for all to see. I doubt if any FSL could ever love as Jesus did, but all love begins by knowing God in relationship and the finding of joy by doing God's will.

4) Jesus was **FORGIVING**. He knew that without forgiveness, people would carry tremendous burdens caused by sin. This included both the one who needed forgiveness and the one who could do the forgiving.

5) Jesus was **COMMITTED**. Wherever He was, or whoever He was with, Jesus was fully in the moment and fully committed to His goals. There were certainly many obstacles during His ministry, but He stayed on track and finished strong. What does that say to us? Most of the times, we want to help but we don't want to commit. We don't want to engage because it is too much! For Jesus, nothing is too much, even his own life!

6) Jesus was **PRAYERFUL**. No matter how busy His ministry got, He found time to be alone and to pray. Whether it was in the garden of Gethsemane, across a river, or on a mountaintop, Jesus disappeared for a while to pray. Sometimes, our ministry takes over our prayer life. How do we deal with that? Jesus always found a way to balance his ministry and his prayer life, and

so should a FSL.

7) Jesus was GENTLE. Gentleness is the sign of respect and a way of approaching people. It speaks of a realization that all people are worthy in the eyes of God and are loved by Him. We know how gentle Jesus was with sinners and those who were sick.

8) Jesus was PATIENT. Did you know that the word “patience” comes from the Latin meaning “to suffer”? Yes, most of the time, patience means a certain amount of suffering as we try to put ourselves in another’s shoes and understand where they are coming from. When we can do that with each other, we exercise the virtue of patience.

9) Jesus was HUMBLE. His humility had nothing to do with self-hatred. It had everything to do with an attitude where there would be less of him and more of God. He understood that all ministry was about introducing or re-introducing people to their loving God and entering into meaningful relationship with him.

A FSL may not have ALL of these characteristics all of the time. But if elected, I believe that, God will give them the grace, to carry out their commitment to the Order. The thing is to remain open to the Holy Spirit, and all will follow. This brings me to the third characteristic of a FSL ...

FSL AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE FRANCISCAN CHARISM

By this time, we know enough about St. Francis and how he went about this world, and the way he regarded people and all of creation.

From his behavior, we have the building blocks of what the Church calls, the Franciscan charism. Our Servants Leaders should allow the Franciscan charism – a way of being and acting in the manner of St. Francis - to inform the way they exercise leadership on all levels of fraternity.

If I would ask each of you what that Charism is, I would probably get all different answers ... and more than likely, they would be correct. But for the sake of this talk, let me mention just a few of the elements of the Charism.

For this segment, I will borrow from the book “Come and See” by the Capuchin, Fr. Lester Bach and Theresa Baker, OFS ... both deceased and who have contributed greatly to the Secular Franciscan formation effort. Let me read some for you if you don’t mind. Maybe you can use this recitation as an examination of conscience.

- Respect for individual dignity
- Hospitality, courtesy, kindness
- Friendship, openness, truthfulness
- Fostering loving relationship.
- Serving, caring for the poor and oppressed
- Concern for social justice issues
- Taking responsible social action
- Offering unselfish service, altruism.

- Respect for all creatures
- Fostering a simple lifestyle, stewardship
- Human dignity and empowerment of people
- Concern for environmental issues.
 - Healing and reconciliation
- Conflict resolution
- Forgiveness
- Care and understanding, to eliminate fears.

The list sounds like a lot ... but if you look at it carefully, you will probably see yourself in quite a few of these Franciscan values, which make up our Order's charism.

These are some of the characteristics we look for in our Franciscan Servant Leaders. We do not automatically receive all these gifts at once during our Permanent Profession ceremonies.

They come to us throughout our Franciscan lives, in the course of time ... through prayer, life in fraternity and through the apostolates we engage in.

A FSL loses him/herself in their ministry. Like John the Baptist – they decrease so that others may increase. Jesus and Francis, of course, are our models for this.

FSL's are always in second place to the people they serve. The ministry is not about them – but about others and their needs. So ... let me conclude with this.

CONCLUSION

Any reflection on (FSL) Leadership must presume that, we understand what is the common good for our Order. The common good is that which ensures that the Franciscan charism ... the special gift to the Church and society, is able to be lived out in our society and Church. All common good, whether political, economic or spiritual, insists on individual freedoms and the respect of individuals as persons, and for us, as people created in the image and likeness of God.

For that reason, any FSL will have to keep that in mind and do everything to protect that ... even in the small confines of a local fraternity.

Any FSL will have to reflect on his or her response to their Profession to determine, how they are living out that commitment, so as to be able to be sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit working in his or her Franciscan sisters and brothers.

It's difficult to be a servant these days. Society tells us that to be a leader is to dominate ... to push one's own agenda ... to be impatient with another's world view. The FSL is the exact opposite.

Because our numbers are getting smaller, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find people willing to take on leadership positions. Sometimes, local elections are like pulling teeth to get people to accept nominations to positions.

But that is the call to serve the Franciscan greater common good. We are not doing it for show, but to grow and to serve at the same time.

I want to thank you, for your kind attention. Please be assured of my prayers for you as a National Fraternity and as individual Seculars Franciscan.

We find ourselves in a period of history, where religion is made fun of ... where civility is on the decline ... where society will try to force us away from the Gospel, which is our rule of life.

Now, let me leave you with the words I use after every Mass ... I'll modify them for today.

THIS TALK IS ENDED ... LET US GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD AS WE LOVE AND SERVE ONE ANOTHER.

And we sing Jane Parker's Blessing:

Let us bless the Lord....
The living and true God.
Let us always give back to God
Praise, Glory, Honor, Blessing, and Every Good!
Amen, so be it, Amen!