The Fullerton-SJI Leadership Lectures II

Lasallian Pathfinders

Of Ordinary Men and Less Ordinary Leadership

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Of Ordinary Men and Less Ordinary Leadership

Editors

Arnold Gay
Vincent Anandraj

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Foreword

Lessons from
The Fullerton-SJI Leadership Lectures II

Arnold Gay

It was midway through the lectures when a young man challenged me on leadership.

He noted that the guest speakers so far had included a scientist, a judge, and a musician, all with colourful life stories, but little to offer on leadership.

He had a point, after all, the traditional view of leadership is what I call the Lion — someone full of charisma, capable of raising armies and pushing people out of their comfort zones beyond the standards they set for themselves.

But that narrow definition would be a severe injustice to the seven men who shared their stories, and their lessons on life and leadership.

Politician, judge, scientist, educator, businessman, musician, and food guru.

You couldn't ask for a more diverse group of Josephians representing such a broad cross section of society today.

✦ Men Who Serve

Tellingly, in true Lasallian spirit, none saw themselves as either fitting, or worthy guest speakers. They agreed simply because they were called once again to share their experiences with a younger generation, and placed the community before themselves.

They are the kind of leaders who form the backbones of successful organisations. They seek neither personal glory nor the limelight, and give their all to make their teams better.

They are the leaders who will endure where others fade.

✦ Courage

It takes courage to be a man who serves, and Casino Regulatory Authority chairman Richard Magnus described this best, when he said leaders must be willing to get their hands dirty, sometimes even at the expense of their own private beliefs and convictions.

Courage is what KF Seetoh and Jeremy Monteiro had when they decided to forge their own paths in life.

Courage is what corporate chief Tony Chew had when he forayed into the great unknown, and Professor Leo Tan displayed that same spirit when he rebuilt the Singapore Science Centre.

⇒ Humility

For all their achievements, all who participated in the discussions are some of the most grounded men I have ever met. Philippine Education Secretary Brother Armin Luistro is a full Cabinet Minister, but he often travels alone and eschews hotels for more humble abodes offered by fellow brothers around the region.

Leadership author Jim Collins discovered that the difference between consistently high performing organisations and all others was the presence of humility in leadership.

He said such leaders were personally humble but fiercely ambitious for the good of their organisations and causes. Brother Armin wandered in the political wilderness for five years as he pursued justice for his people. Yet three years after he became the Education Secretary, his net worth was just \$16,000. As Brother Armin puts it: “When you are poor, you are free, and I am the happiest Cabinet Minister.”

✦ Integrity

Leadership experts sometimes break this into two parts: honesty and credibility. The first value speaks for itself, but the second is worth touching on. I believe it goes beyond the conventional understanding of the word, and into a sense of solidness and consistency about the person. You know he is real, you can believe him and put your faith in him.

Tony Chew believes that a leader without integrity will never earn the trust of people around him, let alone lead them.

✦ Care for Others

Say what you will about tough love, in the end, followers all want to know that their leaders and bosses actually care about them. It creates an environment where people can flourish.

A lack of care only attracts people either willing to be abused or enjoy learning how to become abusers.

✧ It's Not About Me

In a world of outsized egos, true leaders never make it about themselves. The men who took part in this series felt they were accountable; to their subordinates, followers, countrymen, professions, and God.

Call it a sense of stewardship, but ethical leaders don't just do whatever they want. They are always aware they are responsible to others.

The Lions and visionaries will have their place in society as leaders, but as Director of Development & Communications at SJI International, Vincent Anandraj, puts in his closing comments in this book: different and versatile people are behind the greatest football teams. And THAT is what the Lasallian community is all about.

It has been an honour to have moderated the sessions with the speakers of the Fullerton-SJI Leadership Lectures II.

Arnold Gay
Class of 1983