

SOURCE OF VITALITY - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

As we are moving towards the end of this module, we take the time to reflect about those experiences that give life and meaning to our exercise of leadership. This section also invites us to integrate in our daily life practices that enable us to stay connected to our source of vitality and become more aware of it. In the Christian tradition this experience is intimately linked with our own relation to God and Jesus; a relation that revitalises, and offers to us an environment in which we feel embraced and loved.

MAIN IDEAS

Tapping into our deepest desires

Our workplaces, homes and institutions are generally motivated by the desires and choices which lead to human flourishing. It is in the arena of deepest desire, choices and action that mission finds its meaning and **it is essential that we, as leaders can tap into that.** (Duncan & Scroope)

Connecting with our deepest desires and source of vitality is not always easy. Fr. Dario Mollá SJ shares how whenever people want to attend to the more interior dimensions of their lives, the difficulty only increases. In the middle of our personal search for peace and meaning and our striving to connect with our deepest desires, we often experience contradiction and conflict. Part of the challenge may be linked in distinguishing our authentic desires from more superficial and ephemeral ones. We may also experience an incompatibility between our interior movements and desires and the messiness and requirements of our working life, family, and society. Harmonizing both interior and exterior states is difficult and could coincide with discouragement or a sense of guilt.

While doing the exercise that was suggested for this section, you may have noticed that recalling optimal states and remaining grounded in them is not an easy task. It involves a commitment to integrating in our daily life rituals for spiritual development and renewal.

The Christian tradition offers various practices like: prayer, meditation, contemplation, *Lectio Divina*, silence, spiritual exercises, daily examen, discernment etc. There are also many other instruments. [See tree of contemplative practices](#). Engaging in simple practices such as hiking, listening to music, and connecting with nature can also help when done in a contemplative way.

Hence, it does not depend so much on which instrument you choose but rather on finding the one that helps you connect with your deepest self (your human reality, and with what helps you live a life of meaning) and integrate these practices in your daily life.

From the different existing practices each person can choose the one that suits him/her best, we personally recommend the following: [Contemplative Retreat](#) of Franz Jalics, [Sadhana](#) of Anthony de Mello, [Word into silence](#) of John Main and [Centering Prayer](#) of Thomas Keating.

God as our ultimate source of vitality

As mentioned in *Lumen Gentium*, for Christians, **the ultimate source of vitality is God** [“4. ... *He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal*”] They also believe that every person’s source of vitality is God [16...*it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life*] but we sometimes do not realise it because we easily put other things in the way for us to notice. [*But often men [...] have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator*].

In this context, growing in “indifference” and freedom becomes an existential task (Fr. Karl Rahner SJ) to avoid aligning ourselves to the concrete and closing ourselves to the transcendent.

Growing in freedom is related in some ways to an exercise of self-abnegation. The prayer for Light and Help of Saint Claude la Colombiere SJ illustrates this reality:

“Jesus, I feel within me a great desire to please you but, at the same time, I feel totally incapable of doing this without your special light and help, which I can expect only from you. Accomplish your will in me – even in spite of me”

In the process of letting go of self-affirmation a new inner space appears that is even bigger than oneself. This larger profoundness is the one we are called to surrender ourselves to. This surrendering is less about becoming a servant to a master and more about letting in that which is True and Life Giving.

The biggest example in history for Christians is Jesus himself: “*whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me*” (John 13:20) or “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9). It is God who lowers down into Jesus, and he is the incarnation of the emptiness that allows God in (Fr. Xavier Melloni SJ 2010).

Early Jesuits give us these nice allegories to exemplify this “(8) *I should consider myself to be like a dead corpse, which has no will or understanding; second, like a small crucifix that allows itself to be moved about from one place to another without any difficulty, (iii) third, I should pretend to be and act like a stick in the hand of an old man, so that he can put me wherever he wishes and where I may help him most*”.

Tapping into our source of vitality and leading from our core means creating (or leaving space to) purpose, and this ultimate purpose for Christians is serving God himself. As we connect to that purpose and make it something real in our daily life, it will guide the way we lead, and help us live a fulfilling life.

Connecting to a sense of purpose

Our leadership calling emerges from our own history. The more we understand ourselves and connect to our leadership gifts the more we know how we can put them into practice for a greater service of others. Of course a lot of the time, during many days, we have to do work that is humdrum and routine – we can’t escape from that. But ideally our lives would be filled with moments when we feel that we are being who we really are, and this can even be found in routine. When our talents are really matching what we are doing, then we have discovered our vocation, or at least part of it.

In the Christian tradition, the sense of being called by name is fundamental. We are made in the image and likeness of God. Understanding what this means and embracing who we are meant to be is a life's journey. Vocation is something that we discover, or uncover, and also that we grow into. It is a journey of becoming; a journey of mistakes, with some painful turnings; but a journey, also, of exciting discoveries. This is a journey that we have to discern every day. This journey needs prayer and patience; it needs listening and learning from each other. Above all it means getting in touch with my deepest desires, going beyond the superficial desires for money or success to something more fundamental: our genuine desire to give and receive love. There is, finally, another element in our vocation that is related to the 'state of life' that we are in (being married or single, being a religious or a lay person...).

The Second Vatican council insisted that all Christians are called to be holy, to be men and women who can give and receive love. (Vatican II. Chapter V of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*). That is the fundamental call. The questions about vocation are among the big choices that shape our lives. They each generate and call us to love. Love is the ultimate 'vocation' and these are paths to it. The path to that holiness – to being a person of love - can be either as a married person, or as a priest, religious or single person. And then, the work we are involved in and the extent to which we align our talents with the work that we have also have a part to play. It is probably difficult to achieve 100% alignment and every day to make use of all of our talents, but that is the hope to which we are called (Ephesians).

Thoreau, the American poet, said “Most men (sic) live lives of quiet desperation.” Vocation is the opposite of that. It is in fact, where most men and women live lives out of a deep, strong and passionate consolation, feeling inspired in the depths of themselves and also inspiring others.

The question of vocation is at the core of Ignatian Spirituality – trying to love and serve in all things. That means using my talents; offering them for the love and service of others. We can live lives with either closed fists or with open hands. When we live with open hands we become free and joyful. In fact, we get more than we give. “It is in giving that we receive.” [Prayer of St.Francis]. Try it. But first... get in touch with those deepest desires. You will find yourself there and you will also find God.

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Reflecting on foundations for a fulfilling life that allows us to grow in our vocation as leaders
2. Providing instruments and practices that will help us establish these foundations

“I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full”

John 10:10