



**POOR SERVANTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE  
- General Management -**

# *The method of collegiality*



*For an Opera of disciples-brothers-missionaries*

**Calabrian Management: Subsidy 03  
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# POOR SERVANTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

General Management

## THE METHOD OF COLLEGIALITY

*«We are Christians, we live in sincere charity,  
Let us love each other.  
We are all children of one Father who is in Heaven,  
We are all brothers in Christ who redeemed us,  
We are all a single family, the family of God.  
Hate is death, love is life,  
Hatred is torment, love is joy».*

*(San Giovanni Calabria)*

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# Management with the People: a method of collegiality

The XI General Chapter has identified management of the Opera as a means of evangelization. The Chapter members have stated that today the act of managing is an important means to witness our charism. However, in order to evangelize, the management must be collective and participatory, as stated in the final Document: *"Implement a methodology of collegial and management, inspired by the spirit of the Opera, where we envisage the Boards of Directors / Management with the participation of religious and laity. To promote an effective solidarity between the houses and form a thinner and participatory management"*.<sup>1</sup> (XI General Chapter, p. 21).

Many organizations in recent days has adopted the method of collegial and participatory management, both private companies and non-profit or religious organizations. It is a clear choice moving in the direction of promoting a true co-responsibility among

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<sup>1</sup> Documento finale dell'XI Capitolo generale, *Testimoni in tutta la terra, discepoli-fratelli-missionari*, p. 21.

all those who are part of an organization. In this sense, the Italian Church, gathered in Florence for the 5<sup>th</sup> National Church Convention, held from 9 to 13 November 2015,<sup>2</sup> has dedicated an entire chapter of the final document of this event to the theme of collegiality and interrelatedness. Here we want to summarize this chapter, because we believe that this may provide some useful elements on the theme of "Managing with the people" that embodies a central topic for our Congregation. On the other hand "Managing with the people", if done well, should go indeed in the direction of a greater collegiality.

The chapter in question starts talking about how the first Christian communities and the apostles tackled the issues by resorting to the method of collegiality. "*For them, collegiality was the method chosen for discerning the will of God and interpreting the needs of the present reality*". As an example of this collegial choice is quoted in the passage of the meeting of the Apostolic College to discuss the question of receiving the Gentiles to the Church (Acts15).

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<sup>2</sup> "Sognate anche voi questa Chiesa". Sussidio a cura della segreteria generale della CEI all'indomani del 5° Convegno Ecclesiale Nazionale. Firenze, 9 – 13 Novembre 2015.

Another event of the Apostolic Church, used as an example of collegial management function, is the choice made by the Apostles to institute the deacons to delegate certain tasks, so as to enable the Apostles to take care of their own ministry (Acts 6: 1- 6).

These two events just mentioned are important references for managers even today, because they inaugurate a collegial way based on shared responsibility in the management of activities. We find this in the CEI (Italian Bishop's Conference) document: *"This community and fraternal method of managing is not a temporary element, but it expresses the essence of the Church community, and we must imitate them today"*.<sup>3</sup>

The conference in Florence reflects on collegiality with reference to Church's teaching, mainly the Second Vatican Council. In a precise way it defines that, Vatican Council II, the collegiality is *"not bound to a mere preference, but the result of the very nature of the church and its Christian life"*. In fact, when the Church is referred to as 'People of God', its essence becomes communion in Christ among those who have been

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<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 72.

baptized in his name. So *"re-reading of the council documents still recalls the need for a greater Community function, more careful to recognize and appreciate the gifts that the Spirit gives to each one, greater mindfulness that no one, alone, has in hand the personal way, but such light is collected in its togetherness, and point out a collective path."*

For the Council the evangelizing mission is the mission of all the members of the Church, and not just some of them. It would be inapt to think of evangelization scheme carried out by skilled performers, where the rest of the faithful were only recipients of their actions.<sup>4</sup> Hence, in the field of management: we cannot think, today, that only the directors take foreword the Mission of the Organization.

On the other hand, a collegial method cannot be unplanned nor taken for granted, but must be prepared and planned. The only way to train to Collegiality is to manage the activity collegially. Therefore, we can learn the collegial management only when the school, hospital, social activity, parish and religious communities are managed in a collegial way.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 73.



# Authentic ways for a Collegial Method

Then, what are the essential topics to learn this method? Again, we find support in the Congress of Florence, indicating three essential steps to ensure that during the coordination meetings the decisions are made in collegial way.

## 1. THE PREPARATION

Firstly, *"to work together in an effective and non-dispersive way, we must organise"*. You cannot think of coordinating an assembly or a meeting, to share ideas, make plans, without first reflecting on the theme on which you want to discuss. Therefore it is essential to study well the order of the day and focus in advance the participants who would take part, otherwise you risk in improvising. Here are three elements that help the necessary preparation to a synod style and of fruitful collegiality:

**Personal reflection:** implies a personal research on the topic in question. This *"assumes that each participant is notified in advance about the topics that will be discussed"*. For collegiality, it is necessary that the

concerned members have access to all information relevant to the theme you want to treat. In addition, participants should be aware of the method of work and the goals that they have committed. So everyone can get ready to help so that the meeting will end in the best way possible.

**Prayer:** Personal prayer, in view of the meeting, is a good basis for the growth of the meeting, especially since it offers people a more attentive and humble listening mood. Praying before a meeting means to live it more fully and deeply, limiting judgments and avoiding unnecessary criticism.

**Humility:** A humble attitude provides that a person is not supposed to know already the right way about a certain subject. We need patience, to people who stops to think carefully about what one says, and what might be the best proposals on a certain matter.

## **2 – LISTENING**

The second step is fundamental to facilitate a collegial relationship is listening. *"The virtue of listening is essential to build together. Listening to the other reveals confidence that God can also speak through*

*him, and indeed, certainly he is also the bearer of some fragment of truth, prompted by the spirit".*

The problem is that often we are not able to listen well. Listening quality is of vital importance for achieving a shared and collegial management. The Final Document of the Conference of Florence proposes the following elements for a good listening:

**Rules:** a group to work needs shared and precise rules. The moderator must make sure that all stand for these rules. For example, it is critical that all respect the opening and ending times. This is primary sign of respect towards the participants.

Secondly, the debate must have rules. It should not happen that few take the scene dealing with their opinions all the time to the disadvantage of others.

Who leads the joint work regulates the times. If necessary, the coordinator should stimulate debate and direct it to overcome the problematic aspects of an issue, focusing instead on practical solutions.

**Caution:** the speaker at a meeting should perceive the lack of concentration of the participants, or on the contrary their active participation. On this matter, work in small groups, can help to encourage attention and

stimulate communication among participants. To help the concentration is useful to choose meeting times suitably. The coordinator can call the public's attention, asking not to chat and not to comment with neighbours on what is happening in real time, just as it is important to let go smartphones as a sign of respect and attention to the one who is speaking. Listening to the other entails calm and requires practice and patience.

**Actualisation:** listening is not just about the attention on the one who is speaking. It is important to an attitude of listening also to the way that the organization is doing and to the issues that are of concern to managers. Listening helps us to better understand the social context in which we live and the cultural climate that surrounds us. In the end, it also means listening to interpret reality and to know the context, to make a good discernment and understand if our actions respond to the real needs of people.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 76 – 78.

### 3 – THE PLANNING

A true appraisal cannot be limited to the analysis of the problems, which can fall into banality or in the rhetoric, but must reach to formulate operational conclusions.

Here are some ideas that emerged at the Florence conference to promote a concrete translation of the intuitions and proposals:

**Concreteness:** the comparison cannot be limited to the study of the causes and issues. It is necessary to assume and prepare the ways to undertake, which requires solidity and clarity of goal to achieve. *"Having clear the goals, you have to get to concrete and workable proposals, sustainable from an economic point of view and from the managing, which requires defining the powers and identifying, among those present or from persons who could be involved, who can take care of a specific project and be responsible "*. The group discussion should lead to identifying the objectives to achieve.

**Sharing:** the proposal made in the panel must be shared with everyone in the organization, so that everyone can adapt to such decisions. This is done by

convening a meeting with all personnel or through other means, knowing that dialogue is the best way to educate and engage people.

**Verification:** all meetings to discuss issues and plan shall be assessed to ascertain whether the objectives are achieved. It is also useful to organize meetings to ensure that the resolutions and decisions taken at previous meetings are in the phase of realisation.<sup>6</sup>

Only by respecting these three steps, namely preparation, listening and planning, collegial management with people can become a method of making productive the meetings without wasting time, renewing the sense of belonging and responsibility on the part of everyone within the organization.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibidem. p. 78.

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