

Leaders!

Ted Richardson.

National Director AOS Australia

Who are our leaders? Where do they come from? What makes a good leader? Can I be a leader?

Our Church is made up of people, many of those whom we read about and see are well recognised, such as the Holy Father, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, and Nelson Mandela. We have Prime Ministers and Premiers, who are well know leaders and easily recognised.

We have all attended meetings and conferences, where keynote speakers inspire us with their focus on ministry and our work with seafarers. As members of the AOS, we are all leaders in one way or another. A good leader will often step back and allow the members and participants of any meeting or conference to take an active role. I see myself as a leader, but also one who would want to empower others to take charge and shine. It is always easier to do a job yourself, because you know what you want and by letting others take charge, they grow and become the leaders of tomorrow. It may not have been done the way I would have done it, but we must remember that we are not doing this.

Let me tell you a story about my journey. I was not always a Catholic. I came into the Church in the mid 80s. I had been going to Mass with my family, but when my daughter came to making her first communion, she asked me to come up with her to receive a blessing. After communion, I felt that my journey was far from complete. That simply going to Mass was not enough. I needed to continue the journey and receive communion. My daughter at the age of 10 led me on the start of my journey of faith. Since that time, I have been very involved with my Church, my Parish, and our own Apostolate. I wouldn't say I was always a good leader, but I continue to learn.

Leadership is about starting a journey, extending yourself beyond what you think you can do and if you fail, don't worry. Start again. It is in failing that we learn to be better. Don't be scared to give anything a try, no matter how radical or controversial it may be, but listen to others' opinions, take guidance, and you may find yourself given the gifts by God to complete your task. Always remember to help others to discover their strengths.

In a book by Mother Theresa called "A Simple Path: Action, Compassion, Peace", Mother Theresa emphasizes that it is only when the love in our hearts is released that we are able to care for others with true joyfulness, altruism and peace. She said "Everybody has something good inside them. Some hide it, some neglect it, but it is there."

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered,
LOVE THEM ANYWAY

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
DO GOOD ANYWAY

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies,
SUCCEED ANYWAY

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow
DO GOOD ANYWAY

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable
BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight,
BUILD ANYWAY

People really need help but may attack you if you help them
HELP PEOPLE ANY WAY

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth,
GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU'VE GOT ANYWAY

(A sign on the wall of Shishu Bhavan, the children's home of Mother Theresa in Calcutta)

Mother Therese sets before us, a challenge. I think any one of these ideologies can be put to any number of circumstances in your own home life, your work life and your prayer life. Christ calls us all to be leaders in our own way. We can't hide from our responsibilities. We can't shy away from controversy. But by being honest to ourselves and doing the best we can, we can be an example to others and show that we are leaders.

Seafarers look to all of us, whether we are a volunteer, a committee member or a Chaplain or Religious. We have the responsibility whenever we sit and talk to others, to be honest and frank and lead by example. In 2003, we will be holding our National Conference. The theme of the Conference will be on Leadership. We will have open and frank discussion on what the future holds for us all. So don't hide your light, but put it out so that everyone can see it shine.

Keep safe if you are going on holidays and see you all in the New Year. God bless you all and a Joyful Christmas.