Regarding Emotions: Part 3
Inge V. del Rosario, DMin, PsyA

In her book *The language of emotions: What your feelings are trying to tell you* (Colorado: Sounds True, Inc., 2010), author Karla McLaren speaks about emotional agility, the capacity to allow emotional states to move within, interact with, and freely engage the self and other feeling-states:

*Emotional agility does not come from cataloguing and manipulating your emotions, but from attuning yourself to their continuous flow and realizing that all emotions are present in your every waking and sleeping moment... All of your emotions are in constant flow. Your job is not to organize them into little compartments, but to welcome their lively energies into your life.* (162)

McLaren begins from a basic premise, that *all emotions are true*. They are neither morally right nor wrong; they simply are real: *All emotions tell the absolute truth either about the specific situation that brought [an] emotion into play, or about some area in the psyche.* (162) While stepping into emotions and experiencing them may feel troubling or distressing, it is important to note that emotions, by themselves, are extremely valuable in that they have the potential to bring forth both energy and meaning to us, some information about our selves or the situation in which we are engaged. Honoring and acknowledging emotions means being with them, and, while finding healthy ways to express or deal with them, listening to what they have to say to us, or at least, receiving the questions they raise for us towards greater responsiveness and integration.

McLaren devotes whole chapters to specific emotions. In this short review, we will look into the internal questions raised by these emotions: anger; guilt and shame; fear; and grief and sadness.

**Anger** helps set boundaries. If personal boundaries are trespassed, anger surfaces to restore a sense of self, strength, and separateness. The questions that the emotion of anger raises for us are: *What must be protected? What must be restored?* (168)

**Guilt and shame** emerge when personal boundaries are trespassed from the inside: either by something we may have done wrong or something we believe is wrong. The questions that guilt and shame raise for us are: *Who has been hurt? What must be made right?* (197)

**Fear** is the innate capacity to act and react, to modify and change our behavior based on the input we receive. The questions that the emotion of fear raises for us are: *What is my intention? What action should be taken?* (235)

**Sadness and grief** help us slow down and experience our losses, and to let go of what needs to be released. The questions that the emotions of sadness and grief raise for us are: *What must be released? What must be rejuvenated?* (295; 311)

---

Dr. Inge V. del Rosario, DMin, PsyA is a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist. She is the Coordinator of the Psychotherapy and Accompaniment Service of Emmaus Center.
How often have we experienced anxiety over an impending change in leadership? Sometimes we face this when the head of the institution or of a particular ministry becomes unavailable without a ready replacement, creating a leadership vacuum. Uncertainties during the transition may create tendencies to shortcut the prudent selection of a new leader and other compromises that may hurt the institution in the long run.

Like both our Lord Jesus and St. Paul who invested a good amount of time in preparing their successors, the invitation to all who occupy positions of authority within religious institutions is to take on a more proactive approach to leadership succession. A systematic and comprehensive way of early on, identifying, developing and preparing those with the right potential to assume key leadership roles at a future date, is one very concrete way of preserving an institution’s particular charism and gifts in the service of the church.

There are five key steps to institutionalizing a formal succession planning process:

1. **Clarity Strategic Direction and Review Organization Structure.** Have a clear sense of the institution or ministry’s vision, mission, values, priority goals and objectives for the next 3 to 5 years. Then revise your organization structure into one which will optimally support your goals. An important part of this is identifying the top critical job functions and determining the key responsibilities and leadership demands for each of these functions.

2. **Identifying Leadership Competencies.** What particular knowledge, skills and dispositions must your leader have in order to successfully carry out the ministry’s unique mission and strategic imperatives? A carefully selected handful of leadership and management competencies on which to assess your potential leaders is a good way to guard against our natural tendency to get carried away by charisma or to settle for readily available but under-qualified candidates.

3. **Create a Talent Pool.** Make it a priority goal to identify a pool of individuals who display high potential to meet the future leadership demands of the top critical jobs. Look for talents both from within your current organization, as well as externally from other ministries or communities (e.g. another geographic province) within your congregation. Evaluate these selected high potential talents with formal and objective assessment tools, covering the leadership competencies and dispositions identified as critical. Look not only at ability, but also at the person’s expressed aspiration, as well as observable level of current engagement, passion and commitment to the mission, to complete your assessment on fitness for the role.

4. **Create Accelerated Individual Development Plans.** Have each individual in your leadership talent pool carve out a formal, documented development plan, in close coordination and conversation with his/her superior. A good development plan should include realistic and time-bound actions aimed at areas where the individual most needs to grow. Sufficient depth and breadth of leadership experience opportunities should be provided, at a well-calculated accelerated pace of learning that sufficiently stretches the person to a maximum, while at the same time still stays respectful of the person’s limitations. Development actions may range from learning by doing (e.g. permanent or interim assignments, special projects, cross-postings), by education, or from other people (i.e. via coaching, mentoring, shadowing).

5. **Dialogue Regularly.** Conversations about development should take place on a regular basis (at least semi-annually) with each individual in your high potential pool so that plans can be updated proactively.

Naturally, collaboration with the Holy Spirit – bringing to prayer and prayerful discernment the work and fruits of these five steps – is central to ensuring that your institution or ministry remains faithful to its charism and to the needs of the larger Church.

*Formation in a Complex World* is a series of brief articles featuring various perspectives on formation and psycho-spiritual integration. For more information please log on to www.emmausphil.org.