For Personal Reflection

?

1. To what degree am I a 'lone ranger?"
2. In what ways am I reluctant to work with other people? Why?
3. In what ways am I willing and able to work with others? Why?
4. What positive dimensions of collaboration have I experienced? When? With whom? What lessons might I draw from these experiences?
5. What negative dimensions of collaboration have I experienced? When? With whom? What lessons might I draw from these experiences?
6. How well do I trust God, myself and other people?

Further Reading

Norman Cooper. Collaborative Ministry: Communion, Contention, Commitment. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano. Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines. Notre dame: Ave Maria Press, 1987.

Wendy Wright, Joseph Powers. Leaven for the Loaf: Salesian Perspectives on Collaboration. Washington, DC: De Sales School of Theology, 1995.

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Alone?

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

Or with others?

"It is not good that the man should be alone." (Genesis 2: 18)

It's not good for us, either.

We are made to love. We are made to be in relationship. We are made to work, play, pray, speak and listen together.

Working, playing and praying together requires trust. It requires that we be open to who others really are. It requires that we open who we really are to others. It requires that we are willing to risk., to succeed...and even fail.

We are talking about collaboration.

Collaboration is defined as "a mutual approach, shared approach of identifying, releasing and uniting the gifts of all baptized persons." (Collaborative Ministry)

"Seen through the eyes of Salesian spirituality, collaboration might be described as…'Living Jesus.'"

Collaboration seems best suited for living in a satisfying, successful and sanctifying way of life, to work together in helping to surface our own gifts and the gifts of others to help create a world that more clearly reflects something of the saving power and promise of the Kingdom of God.

There are five assumptions that provide a foundation for living life in a collaborative manner, to share life with one another. First, God is the source of all gifts. Second, all persons are gifted. Third, all gifts are intended to help people achieve spiritual growth and integrity. Fourth, these same gifts must help us to support others to achieve spiritual growth and integrity. Fifth, it is about being open to and aware of the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in myself, others and the events of daily life.

"Collaboration seems best suited for living a satisfying life…"

As great as this sounds, why is working, living and loving together so challenging sometimes? Why are we frequently tempted to "go it alone" rather than deal with the hassles or complications associated with working with others to accomplish some goal or pursue some purpose? Why do so many of us try to go it alone? Fear; anxiety; the belief that I don't have anything to give; the feeling that I don't measure up.

There are many reasons, most of which can be broken down into two categories

Attitudinal obstacles. I may want to win at all costs, driven by the need to compete with others. I may suffer from narrow thinking: I discount the contributions of anyone outside of my family or group. I may be arrogant: I might consider myself superior to others, and therefore, I have nothing to learn from others. I could also be burned out: I simply may not be able to reach beyond my own self-absorption or frustration.

Behavioral obstacles. I may be hostile toward others (tough to collaborate with this one). Perhaps I am unable or willing to deal with conflict. Maybe I am a victim of learned helplessness: I see myself as a victim and all others as potential oppressors. I may lack basic social or relational skills. I might have trouble integrating the various facets of my life, and therefore I feel threatened by those who enjoy a greater degree of integration or wholeness.

"Working, playing and praying together requires trust..."

These obstacles—and many others like them—can seriously undermine my ability to live life with others, i.e., to live life to the fullest. Said another way, my failure to collaborate can lead me to—and leave me in—some very lonely places.

Seen through the eyes of Salesian spirituality, collaboration might be described as "as a dialogical, mutual engagement in the art of "Living Jesus." It means teaching each other, growing together, mining the tradition together, sharing the various wisdoms gained through our diverse life experiences." (Leaven for the Loaf)

St. Francis de Sales challenged us: "Be who you are; be that well." While we do, indeed, need to be ourselves, we are more likely to do that most successfully by "being" with one another.