



On July the 7th of 1994, I had the rare privilege of meeting one of the most effective top performers of our time. I was asked to meet and greet Mother Teresa and offer a donation of goodwill for all that she had accomplished. Little did I know that the encounter, which would last about twenty minutes, would give me some incredible leadership principles that were going to last me a lifetime. In my haste to part with the money and capture a picture with the future saint, I kept egging this icon of patience to come to where I was standing so a memory of our meeting could forever be recorded. My camera malfunctioned and any number of efforts to get a picture were thwarted by fate, coincidence or happenstance. I left India disappointed and blamed myself for having come so close to greatness only to fail to have something to show for posterity.

The Sainly Leadership of Mother Teresa taught me some valuable lessons. She was consistent in her quest to save the very poor, calling them "distress in disguise." In an audio series called "Thirsting for God," she tells of the many times when she faced the impossible just to be rewarded because of her **consistency**. She was **loyal** to her cause. In her acceptance speech when receiving the Nobel Peace Prize she simply said, "I choose the poverty of our poor people." These were the people she was called to lead and amidst the degradation and decadence of human decay, she found the self-reliance to be loyal to her cause. She believed in **succession planning**. Even though the world knew her name and her deeds, she knew that one day her role as the visionary for the Missionaries of Charity would end. She knew that she needed a successor whose vision could take this humble organization forward. Her successor was appointed the day Mother Teresa passed on and continuity was established.

The role of top performers is to learn the various attributes that allow people to go from normalcy to greatness. Great people don't start out to be great. They follow their vision with consistency and loyalty. When I wrote a letter of gratitude to Mother Teresa she replied with a picture and a personal note to me. She taught me **humility**. This great lady wrote me a letter thanking me for mailing some letters for her that were sent to encourage the sisters representing the Missionaries of Charity in the USA. Along with the picture and letter were the words, "Be a little instrument in God's hands, so that He can use you any time, anywhere. We have only to say 'Yes' to Him. The poor need your love and care. Give them your hands to serve, and your heart to love. And in doing so, you will receive much more. Keep the joy of loving through serving." In doing this she proved to be a great **encourager**.

I call this segment **Sainly Leadership** because most of us reading this know she got her skills at a venue more prestigious than Harvard and from a teacher who was called just that--"Teacher." I call her a top performer because this Roman Catholic nun who lived and served amidst the poorest of the poor had her home in the only Marxist state in a predominantly Hindu society. (Dominique Lappierre called this infested maze of poverty "The City of Joy.") Yet when she died she was given full state honors and was sent to her resting place on the gun carriage that carried some of the great martyrs of India. She **transcended circumstances** and societal assumptions and rose above the plateau of mortal expectations while practicing **servant leadership** of the very highest order. While many of us will not be called to live a life of such exemplary servitude, we can conclude that all top performers can practice the principles of Sainly Leadership.

"I choose the poverty of our poor people. But I am grateful to receive (the Nobel) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared-for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone." -- Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, 1979