

Vincentians and Human Frailties

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Like any person, a Vincentian has virtues and defects. The members enter the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul precisely to be better people, less sinful and happier, as well as to practice charity with others. I do not know anyone who has not entered the Society of St. Vincent de Paul without this objective. But some Vincentians never change, and it seems that belonging to the organization has not brought them any personal improvement.

It is quite common to find Vincentians who do not accept the decisions of the majority, especially those issued by the Councils. They are Vincentians “hard of heart,” little given to dialogue, intolerant and ill-tempered, who show little or no charitable or fraternal spirit. These members can not get rid of their own opinions and need urgent spiritual support.

Others are reluctant to take part in the initiatives offered by the Councils, for example, Holy Hours, training courses, or social activities (such as charitable bingos or raffles). They never participate in anything; you do not see them at gatherings; they are satisfied with the bimonthly meeting/visit, labeling anything else as unnecessary or unimportant. These Vincentians also need spiritual accompaniment.

There is also another group of Vincentians who are not even there for welfare work, belittling the important role that these social projects play in the community. These projects are smart and successful initiatives of the Conferences, and should have the support of all: not only institutional support, but also financial support. If each active member donated a small amount per month for those works in their region, there would never be any economic problems. Those who do not help the Vincentian works need spiritual support.

There are also those Vincentians who have joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, but it is as if they were not part of it. Their attitudes include: missing meetings without giving account to others, not understanding the existence of donations, not collaborating in the collections, not letting the assisted families be renewed in the Conference, among so many other negative attitudes. And I ask myself: what are these people doing in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul?

I could not end this article without talking about the small portion, thank God, of leaders who are puffed up by their mandates and by their “achievements,” acting in a non-Vincentian way. They can not see that the merits of management belong to the group (the Conference or the Council), not only their personal efforts. This type of person needs spiritual assistance with urgency, because he or she has not understood what it is to be Vincentian. Not to mention those who enter the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with political purposes.

Fortunately, we have a large number of vocational Vincentians, ready to help the poor on their difficult journey through daily survival, encircled in a spirit of solidarity and concerned about social inequalities. These Vincentians are “meek and humble of heart” [1], docile, friends, real colleagues. To that group of partners and friends, I hope that God will fill them with blessings and strengthen them in the way of life. For others, whose profiles I have described here, I suggest an urgent spiritual accompaniment, so that they can overcome their weaknesses and as soon as possible seek their personal sanctification.

[1] Cf. Mt 11:29.

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