

# Spirituality, Commitment and Passion

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During his visit to Belo Horizonte in order to participate in the International Meeting of the Vincentian Marian Youth, the International President of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was asked about the characteristics of a Vincentian leader. After a brief pause, he responded: spirituality, commitment and passion. Let us, then, reflect on these three qualities.

With regard to spirituality ... Vincentian leaders should not only love Vincentian spirituality but should give witness to that spirituality in all their gestures and activities ... in the totality of their life. They should reveal that they know and live, in an intense manner, the five characteristic virtues (humility, gentleness, simplicity, mortification and zeal) and that they are mindful of those virtues when they exercise their leadership.

The spirituality of the leaders should be contagious and should enthuse those who approach these leaders and should permeate those who are close to them, especially those who are part of the administrative structure of the different branches of the Vincentian Family. The Vincentian spirituality that these leaders inherited from Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam, Louise de Marillac, Rosalie Rendu and so many others ... that spirituality should always be an

integral component of their writings and presentations. The message of charity must be constantly highlighted, especially at this time when that message is often suffocated by countervalues and by a philosophy of death. Therefore, the more holy the leader, the better will they be able to deal with eventual difficulties.

Another fundamental characteristic of Vincentian leaders is that of commitment, commitment to a particular branch and its rules, commitment to the poor and their needs, commitment to the structure of the branch and its challenges. That commitment should be total and integral ... leadership is almost a sacramental vocation. This commitment is grounded on the following elements: available (time), skill in conflict resolution, vision for the future. Leaders should be able to pass on to their successors the institution that they directed (and that institution should be in a better condition as a result of their leadership). When that is done, leaders have the satisfaction of knowing that they fulfilled their mission and passed on that mission to a new generation.

It should also be stated that members of the Vincentian Family in administrative roles should be able to count on the unconditional support of the members ... without that support, leadership becomes simply an administrative function that has lost its specific Vincentian spirit. Indeed, the basis for solidarity is grounded on giving value to the membership and to those persons who are being served.

Finally, the third and perhaps the most important characteristic of Vincentian leaders is that of passion and here passion means affective and effective love, contagious enthusiasm. Vincentian leaders who lack this passion are condemned to failure. Passionate leaders reveal that passion in their eyes and is not something that is found in all the people who pass through our life. In the same way that it is sad to encounter professors who do not view their work as a vocation, so also it is sad to encounter Vincentian leaders who are not passionate about who they are and what they do. Only people who are passionate will be able to serve as effective leaders.

Perhaps you might want to discuss this matter in your group: which of the above characteristics do you view as most important? Could one be a leader without these characteristics? How do we prepare people for positions of leadership?

**Written by: Renato Lima Oliveira**

**16th General President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

