



EFFECTIVE CHARITY AND PANDEMIC.

My dear brothers and sisters of SSVP receive a warm greeting. As I am convinced that learning makes change possible, we share these "capsules" of Vincentianism.

This time of social distance that COVID 19 produced, allowed many of us to have a little more time available. That is to say, we were a little "wealthy", as soon as we had a little more time. Many have taken advantage of it: reading books and articles that we would have liked to read long ago, learning new things, doing a course on the Internet, fixing up the house, playing more with the family, praying and meditating in a more peaceful way, visiting the poor with the necessary prudence, generating other ways of evangelizing, etc.

The coronavirus pandemic is taking care in many places, in others it continues, in others, they are in fear of its return. It seems that the safest solution is the vaccine. That it is already there but that it must be distributed so that it reaches everyone.

In this return to "the new normal" there are two positions. 1. Those who seek a more just and fraternal social order. 2. Those who promote a return to activity as if nothing had happened: sowing ambition, exploitation, violence, and injustice. The second position is terrible, but it has enough followers. As a friend said, "What can you expect from a donkey, besides kicking"

As I told you in the last article, the pandemic has laid bare the injustice, the violence, and an unequal reality we were living in. Thus, it was a certain apocalypse. I mean, "removing the veil" by discovering what already existed, but was covered up. For example, in some countries, it has become clear that the health and hospital systems were not designed for the majority but for the part that could pay. As this wonderful bishop, Ignacio Ellacuría said: "A new Calvary, where the new crucified of history stands, there are many public hospitals, where entire families infected by the virus wait on the floor to be treated. Where the poor, the most vulnerable, the oldest, the 'already sick before', were dying gradually.

There is also the labor issue, so necessary. People have to go out to work. Many, if not, die of hunger. Work is a right and a duty. A good part of socialism did not know how to adapt the economy to the new times. Wild capitalism takes away jobs every time it returns. The excessive emphasis on financial capitalism took a lot of jobs. For those who were left out of the labor system, it remains for them to live on informal employment (which is always incomplete) or on state subsidies (which make them tremendously dependent).

Until 2019 there were several million people around the world who lacked proper access to remunerated work as such or were denied the opportunity to work the desired number of hours. With the pandemic, this group increased dramatically. Under these conditions, we can refer to just over 400 million human beings. A good part of this group is young people. To this negative panorama, we must add that the COVID-19 is making 195 million more jobs disappear in the world. The damage is very pronounced and has been recorded in a short time. It is the most severe labor crisis since World War II.

An unfavorable situation, which organized crime often takes advantage of to "recruit" people for its macabre purposes. There is also a sector of employers that takes advantage of hiring in terrible conditions since many want that job. The establishment will try to make profits from the popular sectors, based on two major factors: the poverty that is caused and our disorganization. The post-pandemic scenario in terms of employment is not positive and is not even encouraging in the short term. It is particularly hard on migrants. I personally lived several years outside my country, in Spain and France, and several times I felt the stitch of being an outsider.

There is this fear for a future that we do not control, a very strong sense of finiteness and of temporariness towards everything we do and touch. In my opinion, it is most likely that there will not be a clear, definitive, total exit from the pandemic in the short term, but rather progressive reopenings with some setbacks. For a while, we are going to have to get used to an irregular dynamic in the economic, social, and educational spheres. And I say "irregular" to refer to resolutions that will not always be logical or consistent with each other, a product of this also unpredictable panorama.

Our proposal is to build normality different from the current one. Based on **charity**. Our father St. Vincent show us that charity leads to a qualified practice: cordial, with effective and affective love; which is expressed in a number of concrete gestures. Vincentian ethics teach that a charitable heart produces love. It leads to care for all persons, their spiritual and physical needs. It induces not only to serve but to do so with a friendly attitude. Charity is shown not only by giving what the poor and sick need but by being entirely devoted to them with warmth and closeness. In this way, charitable activity transforms reality. It produces movement par excellence: creative love. This is because charity is creative and inventive. In this way, we postulate the novelty of love, organizing numerous activities in favor of the disinherited. These are a continuation of God's creative love. Looking at it from today, marked by the effects of the coronavirus, only the miracle of charity in solidarity, of a popular organization as well as the practice of a cooperative economy will be able to help survive in these post-pandemic labor transitions. Furthermore, it is essential that we remain united. Are there more elements? Yes, and they will emerge from the popular initiative. Our Vincentian vocation leads us to accompany them.

Mr. Vincent and then Blessed Ozanam tells us that charity is ordained. Therefore, it will not only be an impulse, a certain help; but a coordinated and systematic action. The charity must be made effective with measure and perspective, foreseeing eventualities, and taking care of the details. So, it will be fully fruitful. The good must be done how God wants it and when He wants it. The

Vincentian ethics lies in conceiving the Gospel of Christ as a program to be put into practice. "Making the Gospel effective" is the ingenious and original formula with which St. Vincent expresses our project. So, for him, every charitable action will be a humble continuation of the evangelizing work initiated by Jesus.

As I pointed out in the article of the month of October, in the "school of the Lord", love is affective and effective. Following Vincent de Paul, I want to focus in this article on the effective aspect of love. Effective love consists in the concrete exercise of the work of charity, especially in the service of the poor undertaken with perseverance, constancy, method, and responsibility.

Effective love gives real union with the needy. We make choices in favor of the poor. The effective bring to reality what affective love has discovered. Effective love acts creatively to make it true that in the Church and in society the poor are enlightened citizens. Even if it is sometimes hard to believe. In this way, effective love leads to concrete solutions to the ills that afflict the world of the poor. Of these two facets of love (effective and affective), effective love has primacy. For the charity to have a place of honor it must be active. The primacy of effective love privileges the ethics of action. We could point out that here the popular saying becomes "works are love and not good reasons". This saying teaches us that true love is expressed by actions and not just words, no matter how well-founded they may be. In the face of a discourse loaded with promises and flattering words, this saying proposes to observe the clarity and veracity of concrete, supportive, opportune, and disinterested works as proof of love. A saying that exhorts to the coherence between words and actions.

In his turn, St. Vincent says another phrase that is almost a saying full of realism: "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be at the sacrifice of our arms, let it be with the sweat of our faces". I leave you with some questions: What can we do to improve the work situation? How do we show effective charity? Well, before I brush my teeth to go to sleep, I end this article by wishing you find love and light in your paths.

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