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Vincentian Spirituality

All information regarding spirituality can be found in the Manual, pages 57-60, in the Rule Part I sections 2.1 – 2.4, and on the SVdP USA website in the Member section as part of the Pathways Toolbox. The following is a compilation of information found in the above-referenced materials.

A more complete discussion of Vincentian spirituality is part of the Ozanam Orientation which all members are required to attend – first as new members and then every 5 years thereafter. The next Ozanam Orientation is scheduled on August 13, 2016 at St. Vincent Ferrer Conference in Vallejo.

What is Vincentian spirituality?

“Vincentian spirituality is the foundation of our vocation, endowing it with credibility, veracity, and integrity. God’s grace strengthens, supports and energizes the practice of this specific spirituality.”

Rule: Part I, Article 2.1

Vincentians must be accustomed to "serving in hope," because we are called to bring the love of God to those who are poor and suffering. Therefore, all Vincentians must become rooted in the spirituality that is at the heart and soul of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Vincent taught: “Since Christ willed to be born poor . . . he made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself.”

Therefore, Vincentian spirituality can be defined as “a conscious effort to become and act more like the Jesus of Vincent and Frederic – Jesus seen by them as the *Evangelizer and Servant of the Poor*.” This necessitates a constant, daily conversion of our vision and our treatment of others, so that we become more like Jesus every day in everything we think, do, and say.

For followers of SVdP, spirituality involves a growing relationship with Jesus. Vincent said: “Let us walk with assurance on the royal road on which Jesus Christ will be our guide and leader.” Vincentians strive to grow in intimacy with their Lord and Savior, coming to know what He knows and love as He loves.

Vincentian spirituality is rooted in the words of Jesus and exemplified in the lives and ministry of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and Blessed Rosalie Rendu. Vincentian spirituality was created in the friendship and mutuality of these holy men and women who combined their masculine and feminine gifts. Vincentian spirituality is gentle and strong, nurturing and guiding, loving and



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creative, compassionate and merciful. Vincentian spirituality is indeed rooted in charity and justice.

Vincentian spirituality is validated in the lives and ministry of the countless men and women who have pursued the spirit and spirituality of Vincent and Frederic as members of the Society.

If Jesus stands at the center of Vincentian spirituality, the poor stand next to him. Jesus' words, "you will always have the poor with you" are the reason for Vincentian existence. Vincent echoed Jesus when he said, "in serving the poor, we serve Jesus Christ." Vincentians grow spiritually through their person-to-person service. We do what we do for the person of Jesus, who is, in truth, the flesh and blood poor person before us.

There are two specific aspects of the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul that we follow as part of our Vincentian spirituality. Those two are imitating Christ and being active contemplatives. We are asked to imitate Christ in His words and actions. Throughout his governance of the various organizations he started, Vincent formed his rules around the words and actions of Jesus. Being an active contemplative is in effect imitation of Jesus as well. He showed us that we must be prayerful but also put our faith into action.

Pope John Paul II gave a speech in April of 1980 in which the focus was on both prayer and action. Even though Pope John Paul II was not specifically addressing Vincentians, he could just as well have been. He emphasized the importance of a blend in our lives between prayer and action. This is also the basis of our ministry within the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Society promotes our growth in holiness, our prayer life, as a foundation for the work we do. Pope John Paul also emphasized that it is an important part of our formation as well. We need to focus on this growth in all we do. We need to keep the balance between action and prayer.

Simply put, spirituality is about developing a loving, personal relationship with God.

Vincentian spirituality works; it helps make us holy.

Reflection

How does your Conference practice Vincentian spirituality?

For information about this training module or other training needs, please contact Judy Dietlein, Sacramento Diocesan Council Training Coordinator.