

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 1 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL'S LIFE AND BIOGRAPHY



“The service to the poor must be preferred to everything and must be rendered without delay. For this reason, if at the time of prayer, is necessary to bring some medicine or any help to a poor person, go to him with a very calm mind and do what is convenient, offering it to God as an extension of prayer” (From the writings of Saint Vincent, presbyter, letter 2546).

Vincent de Paul was born in a small rural house on the outskirts of the village of Pouy, about five kilometers from the city of Dax, in the Landas region of south-western France. At the place of his birth, known today as Berceau of Saint Vincent de Paul, stands a modest construction of brick and wooden beams very similar to the house in which Vincent was born in April 1581. His parents were modest peasants, who only counted on the work of the land to care for their many children. Until he was twelve years old, Vincent lived in his house.

He was the third of six siblings. The modest condition of the family meant that very soon young Vincent had to contribute with his work as a shepherd of sheep and pigs to the family economy. Soon, he also showed signs of an alert intelligence, which led his father to think that this son could very well "make a career"; specifically, an ecclesiastical career. He studied elementary and high school at Dax, and later Philosophy and Theology at Toulouse, for seven years. He also did some studies in Zaragoza. He was ordained very young, at the age of twenty, with the intention of being a parish priest immediately and being able to help his family.

He was ordained a priest on September 23rd, 1600. The Bishop of Dax offered him a Parish, but he preferred to continue his studies; he aimed higher, he wanted to be a Bishop. In 1604 he obtained a doctorate in Theology.

It is said that an old woman, from Toulouse, left him an inheritance of 400 escudos, (in the hands of a debtor), whom he pursues to Marseille, where he manages to recover 300 escudos, and return to Toulouse.

When he embarks for Narbonne, he was attacked by the Turks and felt prisoner. Then he was sold as a slave in Tunisia. He passed through several masters, the last of whom was a renegade Christian, whom he converted and thus was able to reach Rome.

Then, he went to Paris, where he met Pierre de Bérulle, at the Charity's Hospital. Bérulle was a priest and founder of a group of spiritual priests.

At that time, the clergy had come out of the wars in a lame state, the decrees of the Council of Trent on the formation of priests were not fulfilled and many bishops lived as great lords, far from their dioceses.

Bérulle wanted Vincent to enter the Oratory (congregation where it is intended to live a fervent priesthood), but he did not accept. Instead, he replaced another priest who enters the Oratory (Congregation of priests who will practice poverty, with a vow not to claim benefit or dignity, against ambition, and that of dedicating themselves to the priesthood, against useless inactivity).

Vincent, named tutor of the family of Phillippe de Gondi, nephew of the Archbishop of Paris, arrived at that destination in September 1613.

During Gondi's travels, he reconnects with the peasants and poor people living in the domains of the noble family. And he realizes that the Gospel demands radical charity.

Visit a dying man in Gannes, near the palace of the Gondi; who is on the brink of death, without having found a sweet and human priestly gaze, to be able to get out of himself and dare to believe in the tenderness of God. There is the vocation of Vincent: tenderness. His heart has been touched. God has already arrived.

Vincent, already touched by God, who had not abandoned him in his hard desert journey, changes his heart and he who did not want to go to the fields of his village now wants to go to the most distant fields to express to all those who they feel lost, that there is a God of tenderness who has not forgotten them. He wants to be a testimony of that divine love. Be present with the tenderness of God.

Vincent did not want to stay with the Gondis any longer and told Bérulle in May 1617. He moved to a small parish between Lyon and Geneva, in the Bresse region Chatillon-les-Dombes, as Parish Priest.



He who spent his life fleeing his origin and destiny, dedicated himself to what he has been escaping since his youth. He has already found his way, the vocation of tenderness.

He established the Central Residence of the Congregation in an old hospital for lepers known as Saint Lazarus' Hospital, where he lived. For this reason, the Pauline or Saint Vincent priests were also called Lazarists.

He founded the Brotherhoods of Charity in 1617, the Congregation of the Mission in 1625, and the Company of the Daughters of Charity in 1633 with Louise de Marillac.

He died at eighty years old on September 27, 1660. Canonized by Clement XII in 1737, Pope Leo XIII proclaimed him **Universal Patron of Charitable Works** in 1885.



“Charity, in fact, is the highest rule, to which everything must tend, she is an illustrious lady, and you have to comply with what she orders. Let us, therefore, renew our spirit of service to the poor, mainly towards the abandoned and the helpless, since they have been given to us to serve as to

lords” (From the writings of Saint Vincent de Paul, priest. Letter 2546).

THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 25: 31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”.

REFLECTION ON THE BIBLICAL QUOTE

We will be judged by our love or indifference towards our brothers, smallest and in need of Jesus: the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and imprisoned. The reason is clear, Jesus' solidarity with them is so strong that what we do with them, we do to Jesus.

Did Vincent de Paul imitate Jesus Christ in this? What are the lessons that he left us?



PRACTICE

1. Which event from the life of Saint Vincent called your attention?

2. In which moment did Saint Vincent let God impact him?

3. Can we distinguish between his purely human life and his life in faith?

4. What are the calls that God made to him?

5. How can we distinguish the calls that God make to us?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 2

SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC'S LIFE AND BIOGRAPHY

Louise, daughter of Luis de Marillac, was born in France on August 12, 1591. If we had a baptismal certificate, we would know who Louise's mother was. The records of that time have disappeared from the archives of the church of Saint Paul, the parish in which Louise was baptized.

Louise spent all her childhood in the convent of the Dominican nuns in Poissy. It was a magnificent home, she had an excellent training, which added to his keen intelligence, for which she even learned Latin.

Luis de Marillac died on July 25, 1604 when Louise was twelve years old. Louise arrived at Paris, and she settled in a boarding house run by a good and pious lady. There she learned the tasks that a woman should know as sewing, cooking and cleaning the house. In a providential way, this prepared her for the future as an educator and founder of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.



The time in which Louise was developing was flourishing, and under the religious aspect, promising. The arrival of the

Carmelites in Paris was of great importance for France, but Louise de Marillac was influenced spiritually more immediately and significantly by another foundation: the establishment of the Capuchins or Daughters of the Passion. At the age of 20, she asked permission to enter this community. But Louise lacked physical robustness and the superior of the Capuchins did not consent, uttering a prophecy: "I believe that God has other plans for you".

In the 12th-century, in France, the marriages of lords of rank were the subject of an arrangement. Her uncle and tutor, Michael de Marillac, committed her to a young bourgeois named Antonio Le Gras. Louise found the happiness and welcome a home. The birth of Michael Anthony filled her with joy. Louise and Anthony formed a good marriage, and it could be concluded that they lived happily.

Seven years later, Anthony became seriously ill, this anguished Louise's conscience, feeling "guilt of infidelity", since she has given word to consecrate herself to God and has not been faithful to the promise. Therefore, she thought that God punished her in who she loves most. On the day of Pentecost 1623, the Holy Spirit descended on her as well as on the Apostles and enlightened her. She was warned that she must remain with her husband and that a time would come when she would be in a position to take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in which some people would do the

same. For the next two years, Louise was constantly by her husband's side until he died.

After the death of Anthony Le Gras, Louise found herself alone again, although in the company of her twelve-year-old son. But Michael Anthony was a difficult child and caused her serious concern.

Juan Pedro Camus, bishop of Belley and a relative of Louise, was her spiritual director, but since he lived far from Paris, he asked Vincent de Paul to take on this task. Louise "feels reluctance to accept" the new director. Humanly, Vincent de Paul was the opposite of his former director. The Bishop of Belley belonged to a distinguished family, while Vincent was of humble descent, he did not decide to lead the guidance of the young widow. He had just established the Congregation of the Mission and preferred to be free to evangelize.

Despite these setbacks, Providence arranged for Vincent de Paul to be Louise de Marillac's spiritual companion. Vincent began to get to know Louise better and understood that: he wanted to "spend and be spent" in the service of God. As a good and practical peasant, he thought of an essential motto; always seek God's will and in a way to make it effective; for the "practice of holy delay" and for the "exercise of charity" Vincent told her: "So, my dear daughter, be humble, submissive, have great confidence and patience, waiting for her holy and adorable will to be manifested".

Vincent and Louise worked as a team and in this way, they discovered their complementarity. They combined a daring initiative with prudent and constant programming. Vincent provided the original vision at the service of the poor formed by the love of Jesus Christ. Louise helped him transform that vision into reality. As God led him to the poor, charity burned in his heart and in this way, he found and appreciated Christ in the hearts, spirits and broken bodies of the destitute whom he served.

While Vincent was preaching a mission in 1630, a thirty-two-year-old peasant woman named Margarita Naseau waited for him as he left the church and told him that she would love to help with charities. Margarita arrived in Paris and joined the charity of San Salvador. The houses of the poor were illuminated by the presence of that angelic peasant woman who not only offered help, but also gave herself.

Her example was contagious and other young women followed her. But young people, recently arrived from the countryside, could not serve the poor without first receiving training. They ignored the most elementary techniques of help, they should be directed and sustained in moments of difficulty. They would need a solid formation, rooted in prayer to remain in service. Only by faith would they find God in the poor and the poor in God. She was convinced that it would be necessary to establish a community dedicated to the service of the poor, the abandoned, the orphans, the sick and the illiterate.

On November 29, 1633, five young people met at the house of Louise de Marillac. In this way, the Company of the Daughters of Charity was born and without being aware of it, the Daughters of Charity opened a new well in religious life because up to this point, being religious meant cloistering oneself; lock yourself inside your convent.

The Daughters of Charity were lay people who lived in community. In the beginning, they did not take vows, but later they began to take simple and private vows once a year. The founders said that the annual renewal gives new strength and new grace to live the vocation. In 1638, Louise organized the Ladies and Sisters for the timely care of these orphans.

In 1634, the Ladies and the Sisters sponsored the renovation of the Hotel Dieu. Vincent recommended that to get closer to the poor, it is necessary humility, sweetness and meekness. In 1640, the Company took over the Saint Jean Hospital in Angers. This was in terrible condition, due to the total abandonment of his administration. The sick was deprived of any help and even shunned the hospital if they were not physically transported to it. Caring for the sick in hospitals became an ordinary task in the life of the Daughters of Charity.

The apostolate of the Company among the galley slaves began at the beginning of 1640. In order to improve the food ration without increasing the budget, Louise had to invent some strategies: Sisters would oversee making the market directly, eliminating all intermediaries. Instead of cooking in the dungeon, they did it in the kitchen of the house, where everything was cleanliness and hygiene. He requested the collaboration of the ladies of Charity, while the food was being served. Louise knew that work among the galley slaves was "one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs". It is for this reason that she wrote this regulation: "They will never speak rudely to them no matter how much they shout; they will not reproach their unjustified anger; they will take care of everyone with tenderness, but especially those who mistreat them the most".

In 1641, Louise inaugurated the "little schools" for the education of poor girls in Paris. These "little schools" were the objective of his particular care.

At the same time, Louise oversaw the formation of the Sisters. In the schedule, an important space was always reserved for "young women to learn to read" and "for them to remember the main truths of the faith".

The beggars were cared for at the Hospice of Jesus Name, which began to function in 1653. This hospice was a true courtyard of miracles. The beggars entered turned into human wrecks and were soon placed in a position to "earn a living" and be useful with their hands. Men spun or wove; the women sewed or mended. A suitable and remunerated job was the remedy against boredom and loneliness; the two calamities of old man.

Years of chronic illness and hard work finally led Louise to her death on March 15, 1660. Louise's official farewell to the Sisters adds up to her entire life:

- Vocation-Task: "Try hard to serve the poor".
- Community: "Especially, live in great and cordial union with one another".
- Prayer: He never ceased to implore upon you the blessing of God "Rejoice always, pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17).
- "Pray the blessed Virgin with fervor that she be your only Mother".

Jesus and the poor are inseparable. Behind the poor man, however rude and vulgar they may appear, is the figure of Jesus. It is the purest orthodoxy of the Gospel: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25: 40). The poor did not take Louise to God. Jesus took her to the poor. The quote that accompanies the shield of the community is: "The charity of Christ crucified urges us on".

As Louise, we live in a fragmented world, a world full of confusion and contradictions, a world where there is suffering, failure, difficulty, loneliness, pessimism, injustice, deception and futility.

Louise welcomed the grace of God, which transformed her restless heart into a brave, generous and compassionate heart which loved intensely. She encourages us to face ourselves directly, to overcome our insecurities and disabilities, to unite with Christ and bring relief and hope to our divided world.

PRACTICE

1. Write the principal characteristics of Saint Louise de Marillac personality

2. Which are the main characteristics of Saint Louise's spirituality?

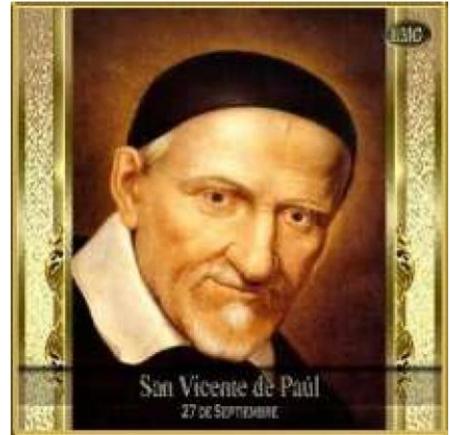
3. What is the name of Saint Louise's community?

4. Describe two qualities of Saint Louise

**THIRD KEYSTONE
VINCENTIAN FORMATION**

**TOPIC 3
VINCENTIAN FAMILY BRANCHES**

Saint Vincent de Paul, the Missionary of God's love, has given us his works in which we can discover the action of the Holy Spirit, as he makes them of great dimensions, in the little and humble brothers.



Through them we can know that they have their origin in his charism and spirit. Few saints have been as active as Vincent de Paul. He thought of a plan, for which he called a meeting, forming an association, delegating jobs and responsibilities to the people of the parish. With this small and simple beginning a whole movement began.

In this way we can mention the great work done by our founder, the fruit of love and perseverance towards those most in need "the poor, our masters and lords".

WORKS FOUNDED BY SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL



Charity Association
(Volunteers of Charity)

In 1617, feeling the need to organize practical works of charity in Chatillon, he founded "*Las Caridades*" (later known as the Ladies of Charity and now called IAC:

International Association of Charities). These quick spread throughout France and then the world, today more Saint Vincent de Paul than reaching 260,000 members. During his life he drew up the statutes for numerous charities that arose throughout France.



Congregation of the Mission (Pauls Fathers)

In 1625, he founded the Congregation of the Mission. At the time of his death, the Congregation had reached Poland, Italy, Algeria, Madagascar, Ireland, Scotland, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys. During his life, the house of Saint Lazarus , she alone gave more than a thousand missions. He served as Superior General of the Congregation until his death, holding regular meetings of the Council, writing its rules, directing the General Assemblies, and solving several foundational problems such as obtaining the approval of the Congregation by the Holy See, deciding whether to take vows, determine which should be pronounced and what should be their content.



Company of the Daughters of Charity

In 1633, together with Louise de Marillac, he founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity. With Louise by his side, he acted as Superior General, presiding over frequent councils, drafting a rule, and resolving the somewhat revolutionary legal basis that would make the Society such a powerful apostolic force for years to come. During his lifetime, more than 60 houses were erected between France and Poland. Later, the Society became one of the largest congregations the Church has ever seen.

WORKS INSPIRED BY THE CHARISM OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (Conferencies)

Founded in Paris by Frederick Ozanam and other young university colleagues in 1833, under the dedication of Saint Vincent de Paul and at the breath of his spirit known through Sister Rosalie Rendú, Daughter of Charity. Now there are 900,000 men and women, from the five continents.

 <p>Marian Vincentian's Youth (MVY)</p>	<p>Born in 1847, because of the apparitions of the Miraculous Virgin to Saint Catherine Labouré, in 1830 in the chapel of the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity. The purpose of this Association, as determined by its new statutes, is the formation of young people to live the Christian vocation, taking as models the Immaculate Virgin Mary and Saint Vincent de Paul. The distinctive notes are ecclesial, missionary, Marian, and Vincentian.</p> <p>There are an estimated 200,000 members worldwide.</p>
 <p>Association of the Miraculous Medal</p>	<p>It is an association of the faithful, approved on July 8, 1909 by Pope Pius X. Its main purpose is to promote devotion to the Miraculous Virgin and exercise the apostolate through home visits, catechetical formation of adults in evangelization and in Vincentian commitment. It is not easy to calculate the number of associates. Some have even affirmed that there are 5,000,000 worldwide. In Spain, it is established in 60 dioceses with 450 local centers and 300,000 people, who receive the visit of the urn of the Miraculous Virgin monthly in their homes.</p>
 <p>Vincentian Secular Missionaries (VISEMI)</p>	<p>In October 1997, the VISEMI Management Commission was formed, to take the steps to become an association. On July 5, 1998, and March 15, 1999, the National and International Statutes were approved, respectively. It is a very recent association within the Vincentian Family. Its roots in the missionary dimension of MVY that, in the last 20 years, decided to serve in a mission country of the Vincentian Family.</p> <p>VISEMI wants to be this new Association that fosters, facilitates, supports, and coordinates the presence and missionary work of the Vincentian laity in the mission "ad gentes", entrusted to the Vincentian Family.</p>
 <p>Vincentian indigenous missionaries (VIM)</p>	<p>It began in 1984 with care for the sick in the heights, integral formation of youth in a training center, pastoral action, responsibility of the parish, and social promotion. They are in the Flores county, in Chimborazo.</p>

 <p>Luisitas y Vicentitos (LUVI)</p>	<p>This Branch was approved in the last National Assembly of the Vincentian Family 2019.</p> <p>It is made up of boys and girls from the city of Piñas, El Oro. They are in the process of formation to deepen their relationship with Christ through the poor.</p>
 <p>Misionary Vincentian Families (Famivi)</p>	<p>It is a new Branch, inaugurated on March 19, 2021, the Day of the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, on the Fifth Anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, within the framework of the Celebration for the 150 Years of Missionary Presence of the Sisters of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, with the Project: "The Joy of Love".</p>

LIFE'S FACT

All pro-poor projects have a modest beginning and develop into a robust being. The original story of Vincent's experience as Parish Priest of Chatillon-les-Dombes sets guidelines in multiple ways for a coherent strategy. Vincent listened attentively to the sorrows of a family in need, and this served as the subject for a moving homily, helping others to sign up for the volunteer list. "God touched the hearts of my listeners". Later when he visited the family, he met other brothers on the way, many offerings help, and supplies. He observed that family members, previously in need, are suddenly provided with much more than they needed, and he realized that part of the food was going to spoil, thus returning to the previous situation of need. The solution in this case was to organize and make charity effective: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25: 40).

PRACTICE

1. Throw whom did Saint Vincent de Paul hear God's call, to find these works?

2. Can you imagine what means to be disciple of the saint founder and by this continue the path of his work, so it does not become extinct?

3. With which branch does your Vincentian hearth identify?

4. From your branch, how can you strengthen the unity in the VINFAM?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 4

THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL, PATRON OF THE VINCENTINE FAMILY

HISTORY, APPEARANCES AND THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF IT'S SYMBOLS



The story begins in France in the chapel of the convent of the Daughters of Charity, in 1830. In Carrer del Bac, number 140, in the heart of Paris, there is the Mother House of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which they founded Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac.

Catherine Labouré was chosen by the Virgin Mary to spread The Miraculous Medal.

SISTER CATHERINE LABOURÉ FIRST DAYS

Catherine Labouré was born in May 1806, her life was austere and simple. She enjoyed tender devotion to Mary. As a child, at the age of 9, she lost her mother. It was then, when a maid of the farm surprised her perched on a table, and embracing with all the power of her, still weak arms, an image of the Virgin.

Through a dream she discovered her vocation. In her dream, an old priest appeared to her who spoke to her in these terms: "Now you flee from me, my daughter; the day will come, when you are very happy, to be mine. God has his designs on you. Do not forget it". For two years she struggled with the rigor of her father; and on April 21, 1830, she entered the Novitiate of the Daughters of Charity, in Paris. The parish priest of Chatillon deciphered the dream in this way: "You have no doubts; that old priest is Saint Vincent de Paul, who wants you as a Daughter of Charity". She herself confirmed it, recognizing the old man in the dream in a painting that the Sisters of Chatillon had of the Saint.



SISTER CATHERINE, DAUGHTER OF CHARITY

In the novitiate, she began to enjoy extraordinary favors from Heaven. The Lord was made visible to her in the sacrament of love. Only once He was hidden from her; when she did not believe in what she saw.

In those days the solemnity of the translation of the Glorious Relics of Saint Vincent de Paul was celebrated in the streets of Paris; says the Sister who found in all so much happiness and content, that for her there was nothing left to ask or wait in this world. She received from Saint Vincent accurate teachings and very complete assurances for his two Communities, the Daughters of Charity and the Lazarist Fathers.

APPEARANCES

The apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Sister Catherine were three, as indicated below:

First Apparition: The night of July 18, 1830, was chosen by the Blessed Virgin to deliver her credentials to the humble Sister Catherine.

For details, no one like sister Catherine herself, who describes it this way: my desire to see the Virgin was so great that I went to bed with the confidence that Saint Vincent would get it from the Lady. It was no later than eleven thirty at night when I heard someone calling me: "Sister Labouré, Sister Labouré, Sister Labouré". I woke up; I looked from where the voice came from. I drew the curtain and I saw a boy, about five years old, who was wearing white; and so, he told me: "Come to the chapel, the Virgin is waiting for you there". Reassured by him, I hurried up to get dressed and I followed him. My surprise was not small, seeing everything illuminated. This reminded me of Christmas Mass. However, the presence of the Virgin was nowhere to be seen.

Kneeling, my waiting time was long. Increased the fear of being discovered. The time has come. And the child warned me with these words: "Look, there you have the Blessed Virgin". I noticed a touch of silks that went to the side of the Gospel, to an armchair. It was the Virgin, who offered herself to me sitting down. I think it is impossible to describe how much I saw and what happened in me: something like a fear of being deceived and that the one I saw was not the Blessed Virgin. But my guardian angel, which was not another child, rebuked me somewhat severely and without further hesitation, I knelt next to her and put my hands on her lap.

And there, hand in hand, as from mother to daughter, "**I want, my daughter, she told me, to name you as my ambassador. You will suffer not a little; but you will win, thinking that you are all for the glory of God. With simplicity and trust say how much you understand and see**".

The Virgin spoke to her of the evils of the world, of the renewal of the Daughters of Charity and of the Eucharist, as the source of all graces. "**Come to the foot of the altar. Here you will be given all thanks if you ask with confidence**".

Prudent, the Sister, asked for proof of what she had seen and heard. And the Lady offered them. The Sister prophesied, and their prophecies were fulfilled.

Second apparition: It was at the Chapel of the Daughters of Charity, at 5:30 p.m. November 27, 1830, while she was doing meditation, together with her sisters from the Community.

Sister Catherine recounts this apparition: "In the midst of a great silence, I seemed to hear the touch of a silk dress. I looked towards the altar and saw the Blessed Virgin, she was standing and resting her feet on a sphere and crushing the head of a serpent with her feet".

Mary triumphs over the forces of evil. She appeared dressed in aurora white and resplendent. A white veil descended from head to toe. The face was uncovered and of such beauty that it would be impossible for me to describe it. She set her feet on a half sphere. In her hands held a sphere, crowned with a small cross. Catherine heard: **"This globe represents the whole world and each person in particular"**.

On the fingers of her hand, I saw rings covered with precious stones, which gave off flashes of light. Her eyes were directed upwards, in an attitude of prayer. The globe of the hands vanished, and they leaned towards the earth, in a motherly attitude. She lowered her eyes and stared at me. I heard his voice tell me: "The rays of light symbolize the graces that I pour out on the people who ask me with confidence".

Our Lady made me understand how generously she pours out her graces on those who pray; what joy she feels in granting them. The rays without light represent the souls that do not pray to the Virgin. An oval was formed and in it, surrounding the Blessed Virgin, I saw these words written in gold letters: "OH MARY SINLESS CONCEIVED, PRAY FOR US THAT WE COME TO YOU"!

A moment later, the painting turned around and I saw the letter "M" and above it, supported by the Cross. To the letter M the Heart of Jesus crowned with thorns and the Heart of Mary, pierced by a sword; and the entire outline surrounded by twelve stars. They are the figure of the twelve apostles and represent the Church, light for the world. I was thinking inside myself if I had to write something too. I was answered: "The letter M and the two hearts say enough".

I heard a voice that said to me: "Have a medal struck according to this model. As many people wear it with confidence, they will receive great thanks".

Third apparition: One afternoon in December 1830, during prayer in the chapel at 5.30 p.m., Catherine heard the soft touch of a silk dress. The Blessed Virgin appeared on the altar. She told her: "You won't see me anymore". It was the last appearance.

PRODIGIOUS DIFFUSION

Catherine entrusted everything to Father Aladel, her confessor and spiritual guide. And she spent the rest of his life, 46 more years, in the humble and silent service of the poor: elderly in the hospice, miserable neighborhoods, wounded by revolutions and wars.

The Virgin Mary wanted to give her children the shield of faith in the Medal of the Immaculate.

Finally minted the Medal in 1832, it spread throughout the world. The Christian people, in view of so much disease driven away, so much bad habit broken, and virtues acquired; of so much distant danger and blessings obtained by the Holy Medal, they called it "Miraculous Medal". Name that holds primacy over all other objects of devotion.

"Spread the Medal" is the watchword of Saint Catherine while she lived. Popes and kings; adults and children of all ages have proclaimed it The Miraculous Medal ever since. Thus, how the wish of Sister Catherine was fulfilled: "Through the Medal, Mary will be the Queen of the universe".

In June 1832, the distribution of the first Medals began in Paris, authorized by the Archbishop of Paris Monsignor De Quelen. Before the end of the 19th century, more than a billion medals had been distributed on all continents.

This is the only medal in the world, designed by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Miraculous Medal called the "Gospel of Mary" contains the dogmas of faith:

The Immaculate Conception: "Oh conceived sinless Mary, pray for us who turn to you".

Perpetual Virginity: Because of the white veil that Mary wore from head to toe, it recalls the veil with which the virgin women of the first Church covered her head.

Divine Maternity: The Cross, sign of Christ and of his redemptive work, is born and is supported by the letter M, the first letter of the name of Mary, Mother, Woman, The Glorious.

Assumption: Mary on the sphere, appears full of resplendent beauty and Queen of the Universe.

Furthermore, in the Medal we find an invitation to devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary; being the Cross a fundamental point in the Medal.

The Cross: Synthesis of the Gospel of Jesus; sign of the paschal mystery, death, and resurrection of Christ. From the Cross, Jesus gives us Mary as Mother.

THE MESSAGE OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

The main message of these apparitions that occurred on July 18 and November 27, 1830 was to present to the world a Medal in which the Virgin appears as Immaculate, Queen, Co-redeeming, and Mediatrix Mediator of Graces. The Blessed Virgin in person presented Sister Catherine the model of this Medal: "Have a Medal struck according to this pattern. People who wear it with confidence will receive abundant graces". Let us look at the Medal and discover on its two sides that the essential message of the Mystery of Salvation complements each other.

FRONT OF MEDAL

It shows Mary Immaculate, Mother of humanity. Mary, messenger of God's tenderness, is shown standing. She comes to us with open hands and a welcoming attitude. Mary is the one without sin. That is why crush the head of the snake. A prayer is read "Oh conceived sinless Mary, pray for us who turn to you". It lets us know that it is the Immaculate Conception.



REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

It shows the Project of God's Love towards humanity.

M crowned by the Cross: Mary is intimately united to the mystery of the Passion and of the Cross of her Son, from the Manger to Calvary.

Two Hearts: that of Jesus and that of Mary. They represent the force of love that reaches total surrender. Mary fully entered that Mystery of Love of our redemption.

Twelve stars: Jesus established his Church on the foundation of Peter and his Apostles.

PRACTICE

1. In which dates did Virgin Mary appear to Saint Catherine?

2. What is the meaning of the lightings that appear from her fingers?

3. As a Vincentian, what does the miraculous medal represent in your life?

4. What is your compromise towards the love Mary shows us?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 5 VINCENTIAN FAMILY'S SAINTS

SAINT CATHERINE LABOURE

Fain-les-Moutiers is a small Burgundian village, not far from Dijon, with just two hundred habitants. As soon as you enter the village, your eye is drawn to a tall tower: it is the dovecot of the Labouré farmhouse with its 600 pigeons. In this environment Catherine was born on May 2, 1806. She is usually called Zoé. She is the eighth of the ten children of Peter Labouré and Magdalena Gontard.

Catherine's mother died suddenly on October 9, 1815, leaving her very moved at the age of nine. Filled with tears, she remembers a prayer that her mother made her recite faithfully every night. She takes an image of the Virgin and says: "Now you will be my mother". She established that bond with her on the night of faith as a free and responsible girl.

At the age of twelve, Catherine became a farmer. She assumes the role of mother of the family and mistress of the house. She was the first to get up. The main task of every day was to tend to the kitchen. In addition, she had to milk the cows, distributed the fodder, took the herd to the communal drinking trough, prepared food for the pigs, collected the eggs from the chicken coop, draw water from the well.

On May 2, 1817 when he turned 21. She exposes her decision to be a Daughter of Charity to her father, who rejects it. He has already given God a daughter and has always told him that he would not give him two. He sent her to Paris with her brother Carlos who had a wine shop and a tavern. He is happy to have his sister with him; but very soon he discovers her suffering. He communicates it to his father, who does not want to know anything. Catherine's brothers agree, and Hubert has the idea to put her in the boarding house his wife has opened, near Fain-lès-Moutiers. There, in Châtillon-sur-Seine, she learned to read and write.



The Daughters of Charity have a house in Châtillon, and Catherine goes to see them. She got a surprise: at the entrance of the house, a painting catches her sight. The priest she had seen in his dreams is Saint Vincent de Paul

Her brother decides to speak with her father again because he saw Catherine so happy, when she was with the Sisters. He convinced him, so he ended up accepting his daughter's vocation and her final farewell to Fain-les-Moutiers.

On April 21, 1830, Catherine Labouré was admitted to the seminary of the Daughters of Charity, rue du Bac 140, in Paris. They have told her that the training period was hard, but she was prepared for everything. Nothing weighs on hers, especially now when she acts following her heart.

As soon as she arrived, she received news that comes to fulfill her wishes: the relics of Saint Vincent will be solemnly transferred from Notre-Dame to Saint Lazarus, the Chapel of the Priests of the Mission, Pauls Fathers on April 25.

In the seminar, the day passes between work, prayer and study. The Sisters prepared to be Daughters of Charity for ten or twelve months. Nothing distinguished Catherine from others.

However, on July 18, a little before midnight, Catherine had an encounter with the Blessed Virgin. She announces that she will entrust her with a mission. She warns her not to let herself be stopped by difficulties, but to come to pray to Jesus in the Eucharist. Four months later, on November 27, 1830, she had a second visit from Mary, and entrusted her with the mission of minting the Medal.

On February 5, 1831, Sister Catherine left the seminary. She is destined for the Enghien Hospice, a nursing home. Being the youngest, Catherine is entrusted with the hardest jobs: cooking, tending to the corral and the farm. Despite the limited resources of the house, she managed and prepared appetizing dishes, for the good of all.

Since February 1834, before any account was published, the medal is commonly described as "miraculous", a name that will remain. Catherine did not forget the request that the Virgin gave her to transmit to Father Aladel: "The Blessed Virgin wants a mission from you. You will be its founder and its director. It is a Brotherhood of daughters and sons of Mary to which the Blessed Virgin will grant many graces. Indulgences will be granted. Many will be celebrated holidays. The month of Mary will be celebrated with much pomp in many places".

The work arose spontaneously in 1838, on December 8, 1838, with a group of Daughters of Mary. The association was constituted on February 2, 1840. Since then it began to spread to other places. On July 20, 1847, Pope Pius IX granted in writing

the faculty "to establish in the schools run by the Daughters of Charity an Association under the patronage of the Immaculate Virgin".

On May 31, 1871, Sister Catherine met again with her hospice, with her garden, with her gatehouse. There is an atmosphere of joy. The poor, more numerous after so many upheavals, feel happy to see her again, at the door, always welcoming and generous. They know that they are her favorites.

Catherine was 65 years old, but she still got up at 4 in the morning, when the bell rang. Her old age is solid. Her prayer is exemplary and sober: she stands upright, immobile, with her hands barely resting on the kneeler, with her transparent gaze fixed on the tabernacle or on the statue of the Virgin.

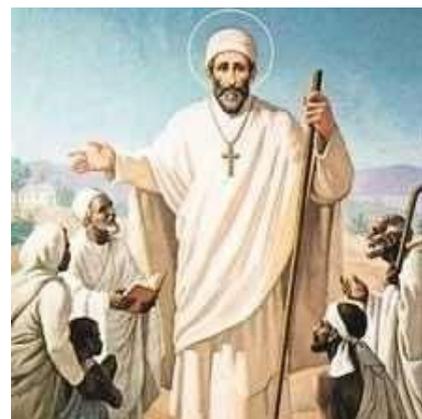
She already feels her strength diminish, and that death approaching. It was December 1876, Catherine was more and more prostrate, did not get out. Calmly assured: "I will not see the end of the year".

December 31, 1876, the year was ending, and Catherine is still alive. Death did not appear to be imminent. She received communion and the Sisters recited the rosary with her. Gently, the smile on the lips, expires. It was 7 in the afternoon. That same night, in the dining room, Sister Jeanne declared: "There is nothing to hide anymore. Catherine was the one who saw the Blessed Virgin and was commissioned to have the miraculous medal struck".

Catherine was declared a saint by Pius XII on July 21, 1947. Today, her body rests in the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal, Paris, rue du Bac 140. This chapel has become a place of pilgrimages. The crowds respond to the invitation of the Virgin Mary: "Come at the foot of the altar: there graces will be poured out on all who ask for them with fervor".

SAINT GIUSTINO DE JACOBIS

Giustino Sebastian Pascual de Jacobis was born on October 9, 1800 in Saint Fele (Basilicata, now in the province of Potenza, Italy). He was the seventh of 14 children from a family enriched with noble traditions and a deep life of religious faith. On October 17, 1818, he entered the Congregation of the Mission, in the novitiate of the Neapolitan province. On October 18, 1820, he made his vows, and on June 12, 1824, he received priestly ordination from the Archbishop of Brindisi, Mons. Domenico Maria Tedeschi.



For fifteen years he exercised the priestly ministry in southern Italy with edifying piety and prudent zeal, distinguishing himself above all in assisting the cholera patients during the epidemic of 1836. He also leads missions for the poor people, preaches spiritual exercises and carries out other charity activities. For a year he exercised the office of director of the Internal Seminary, in Naples; then he was appointed superior.

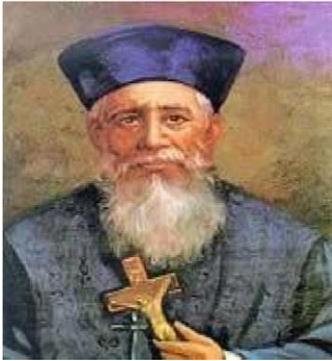
In 1838, after much insistence by the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, he agreed to go to the mission of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), entrusted to the Congregation of the Mission. His intense apostolic life is dotted with complex difficulties, among them the delicate relationships with the local authorities and the Coptic Orthodox Church, which demonstrated the talents and organizational capacity of the missionary.

The prefecture of Abyssinia was elevated to the category of Apostolic Vicariate and the "Abuna Yacob Mariam", as the faithful affectionately called him, was appointed Titular Bishop of Nilopoli and Apostolic Vicar of Abyssinia on June 6, 1847. He was consecrated bishop in 1849 and for twenty years he developed an intense missionary and ecumenical work. He was at the total disposal of the people he evangelized and knew how to do everything to everyone, like Saint Paul himself. He told them: "The Holy Spirit has placed in my heart a great love for Ethiopian Christians. If God grants me one, two or more days to live, I will use them for your good, because God reserves them for me. You are the owners of my life because God has given it to me". In 1854, when he refused to leave Gondar and Abyssinia, after various events he was imprisoned. Released and then expelled again, he avoided capture by taking refuge in the Semien Mountains. Other moral and physical tests tempered the spirit of Guistino de Jacobis. The fame of his virtues and his heroic apostolate laid fruitful roots in an evangelization of which the traces of the lines drawn by him are still evident today. He died in the Aligadé Valley on July 31, 1860. On July 28, 1935, the decree on the heroic nature of his virtues was published, and on June 25, 1939, Pope Pius XII proclaimed him blessed. Pope Paul VI canonized him on October 26, 1975.

His feast is celebrated on July 30. He knew how to make those words of Saint Vincent his own: "Let us surrender ourselves to God to go throughout the earth to carry his holy Gospel; and wherever He places us, let us know how to maintain our position, may difficulties prevent us. The salvation of the people and our own salvation are such a great benefit that it deserves any effort at whatever cost; It does not matter that we die before, as long as we die with weapons in hand" (XI, 290).

SAINT FRANCIS REGIS CLET

Francis Regis Clet, along with 119 other Blessed Martyrs who died in China, was canonized on October 1, the Jubilee Year 2000.



Regis Clet was born in Grenoble (France) on August 19, 1748. At age 21 he entered the Congregation of the Mission (Pauls Fathers). He was ordained a priest in 1773. For 15 years he served as professor of Theology at the Major Seminary of Annecy. He was admired for his great goodness and his culture; they called it the "living library". In 1788, he was appointed Director of Novices at the Mother House, Paris. A year later the French Revolution began. He was forced to leave France and asked to go to

the China Missions. For 30 years he evangelized in the immense provinces of KiongSi, Hou-Pe and Ho-nan, with great enthusiasm. A violent persecution against Christians forced him to flee from his poor home. Betrayed by an apostate Christian, in exchange for 30 coins, he was subjected to infinite vexations and sufferings, which he endured without the slightest complaint. He was sentenced to be strangled. Tied to a cross, the sentence was carried out on February 18, 1820. Almost 50 years later, his relics were taken to the Mother House in Paris, where they currently rest, in front of the relics of his missionary brother, Saint John Gabriel Perboyre.

SAINT GABRIEL PERBOYRE



The first of a family of eight siblings, Gabriel was born on Epiphany day, January 6, 1802, in the village of Puech, Montgesty parish, Cahors diocese. Two of his brothers entered the Congregation of the Mission; one sister was a Daughter of Charity and another a Carmelite nun. The Internal Seminary begins in Montauban in December 1818. In September 1826 he received priestly ordination. He was immediately assigned as a professor and moderator to the Saint Floro Major Seminary.

A little later he was entrusted with the direction of the Internal Seminary of the congregation in Paris. But he insists again and again on being sent on missions, in the footsteps of Saint Francis Regis Clet. Finally, in 1835 he was sent to mainland China and on August 29 he disembarked in Macao. For five years he worked tirelessly in the mission in China, amid difficulties and persecutions, until he was led to martyrdom on September 11, 1840, betrayed by one of his faithful. He died in Uchanfu.

He was granted the grace to "participate in a unique way in the mystery of the Cross". His arrest, his trial, and his conviction reproduced the painful passion of Christ. He died on the cross like Him. His deep piety, nourished by an innocent and pending life, the apostolic zeal for the salvation of men and the sincere desire to resemble Jesus Christ have earned him the nickname "Another Christ". The saint said: "We cannot achieve salvation except by conforming ourselves to Jesus Christ. When we died, we will not be asked if we have been wise, if we have held distinguished positions, if we have

made a good impression on the world; we will be asked if we care to understand Jesus Christ and imitate him”.

He was beatified on November 10, 1889 by Pope Leo XIII and on June 2, 1996 he was canonized by Pope John Paul II. His liturgical feast is celebrated on September 11. Many members of our Vincentian Family pray daily this prayer composed by the holy missionary:

O my divine Savior! By your omnipotence,
by your infinite mercy, make me change and transform myself into You, may
my hands be your hands and my tongue your tongue.

May my body and my senses serve only for your glory.

But above all, transform my soul and all its powers: may my memory, my intelligence,
my will, be like your memory, your intelligence, your will, that my actions and my
feelings are like yours.

And just as the Father said of you:

"I have begotten you today", he can
also say it of me, and even add:

"you are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased"! Amen.

SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

Elizabeth Ann was born in New York on August 28, 1774, into an Episcopalian family. She married William Seton at the age of twenty and had five children. On December 27, 1803, she became a widow.

Passionate about the truth of the faith, she began a spiritual search that will lead her to embrace Catholicism on March 14, 1805, which meant for her multiple tests, both internal and external, coming from relatives and friends.

She could say like Saint Paul: “I lost everything, in order to win Christ and exist in him” (Phil 3: 8). She passed them all with faith, love and courage. She assiduously applied herself to the spiritual life and educated her children with care. Eager to dedicate herself to charitable and educational activity, she founded the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph in Baltimore in 1809, renewing the feat of Saint

Vincent and Saint Louise on American soil. The purpose of this Institute was to train girls. It was the first female religious Congregation in North America. After her death, the Sisters joined the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Paris, as her wish was from the beginning. She also founded the first Catholic parochial school in the United States.

She died piously in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on January 4, 1821. Her beatification took place on March 17, 1963, under the pontificate of John XXIII. On that occasion the



Pope said about her: "God providentially guided this woman, so that she would go through various trials and understand the deep secrets of spiritual life. Growing up became as normal for her as breathing, and love for her neighbor, reached such intensity in her that it made her feel the presence of God who comforts the humble".

On September 14, 1975, she was canonized by Pope Paul VI. Two great themes marked her spiritual life: fidelity to the Church and the eternity of glory. She is the first saint of the United States of America. Her feast is celebrated on the Church calendar on January 4.

SAINT JEANNE ANTIDE THOURET

She was born on November 27, 1765, in the French village of Sancey-le-Long, Diocese of Besançon. In 1787 she joined the Company of the Daughters of Charity and in which she remained until 1793, the year in which the community was dissolved as a result of the stormy French Revolution. Jeanne Antide would keep a great sympathy and admiration for the spirit and works of the Daughters of Charity. She returned to her hometown, where she carried out a fruitful work of charity with the poor, making up for the absence of a priest, during many dangers.



With the Revolution abated, she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity under the protection of Saint Vincent, in 1799. This brought her new trials and persecutions, from which she emerged victorious thanks to the faith and love of Jesus Christ, to whom she constantly said: "In you alone, Lord, I have put all my trust and my faith, because he who hopes in you will not be confused". She died in Naples on August 24, 1826. Her memory makes us ask the Father to instill in our hearts the ardor of his charity, so that we may always participate with our humble service in the spread of the burning fire that Jesus Christ came to bring to earth.

BLESSED FREDERICK OZAMAN

A man of solidarity questioned by poverty.

He was born in Milan on April 23, 1813. After high school classes in Lyon, during which he overcame a religious crisis, he arrived in Paris for his university studies. The defense of the truth and social commitment constituted the two poles of his brief but generous existence.

A law and literature student in Paris, he worried about the political and social problems of his time. In the middle of the industrial revolution, he wondered about the role of the Church, in the face of the poor who were increasingly.



After an epidemic of cholera in Paris, his faith pushed him to react with the help of Sister Rosalie Rendu, Daughter of Charity, Emmanuelle Bailly, a Catholic journalist and five of his friends. He founded in 1833, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, whose members bring friendship, spiritual support, moral or material help to families and people who are alone or experiencing difficulties.

Holder of the Chair of Commercial Law in Lyon, later Professor of Foreign Literature at the Sorbonne, he devoted himself to the study of the Civilization of the V century, of the Franciscan Poets in the Italy of the XIII century, of Dante and of Catholic philosophy in the XIII century.

In 1848, he participated in the founding of the newspaper "*Nueva Era*", in which he promised to "bring the spirit of Christianity to the republican institutions". The same year he ran for the National Assembly elections. His program, very audacious, came from a prophetic intuition that gave a feeling of the widening gulf between strong and weak, rich and poor. "I would like to lock the whole world in a network of charity".

His thinking largely permeated social Catholicism. We find him in the encyclical "*Rerum novarum*" of Pope Leo XIII (1891).

His health prematurely distanced him from teaching, which he considered an apostolate. That is why, he devoted his last strength to scientific research and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, before going out at age 40 in Marseille, on September 8, 1853, with a total abandonment to God.

"The only rule to follow for human acts, the only law that should govern them, is love".

He was beatified in 1997, during the J.M.J.

Son, husband, father and friend, of a unique delicacy, he profoundly marked all those who knew him. Witness of Charity in all aspects of his personal, family, professional and civic life, his beatification process opened on March 15, 1925. It closed on June 25, 1996, with the signing of the pontifical decree, recognizing the miracle obtained through his intercession.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed on August 22, 1997 in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Paris, during World Youth Day.

BLESSED CEFERINO GIMENEZ

"Long Live Christ the King"! These were the last words of the gypsy Ceferino Gimenez Malla on the night of August 2, 1936, in which he was shot by republican militias during the Spanish civil war. He died with the rosary in hand, along with twenty other people. "It was something incredible, reports a soldier witnessing the events, today a priest in a church in Zaragoza, they advanced joyfully as if they were going to a party. They wouldn't stop singing and reciting prayers". After forty years, the Church has recognized the sanctity of this humble Spanish gypsy, this mule dealer, this illiterate wise man, beatifying him on May 4, 1997, in Saint Peter's Square.



"Tall, slim and distinguished", "*el Pelé*", as his gypsy compatriots knew him, belongs to this long tradition of pilgrim saints, nomads of Christ, who were among others, Saint Benedict, Saint Joseph Labre, Saint Roch or Saint Francis. "His life was consistent with his faith, Pope John Paul II emphasized in his homily, he practiced charity with all, was respected in his work, restored peace in all conflict situations and lavished wise advice in any situation that arose. He prayed frequently and belonged to various religious associations".

Above all, he was a regular member of the Saint Vincent de Paul de Barbastro Conference in the province of Huesca, in Aragon. He also shared with the Blessed Frederick Ozanam the same love for Saint Francis; he entered the Franciscan third order in 1926. "His Christian life reminds us all that the message of salvation knows no boundaries of race or culture, since Jesus Christ is the redeemer of the men of every tribe, race, people and nation" concluded the Holy Father.

BLESSED SISTER ROSALIE RENDU



Rosalie Rendu was born in the town of Confort (department of Ain), France, on September 9, 1786. Her parents were Juan Antonio Rendu and Mary Ann Laracine. A few years later her father died, and his mother was left to care for her three children. It was the time of the Revolution, difficult time.

She received his first communion clandestinely. She did her studies at the Ursuline boarding school in Gax, several kilometers from Confort.

She was only 16 years old when she gave herself to God and the Poor, entering the Company of the Daughters of Charity, on May 25, 1802. Throughout her long life the virtues of Saint Vincent de Paul could be seen reflected in her. Charity prompted her not only to tirelessly help all miseries, but also to carry out truly heroic gestures. His name and his action are at the beginning of all the charitable works that flourished in the first half of the 19th century, such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Frederick

Ozanam, its founder was one of his privileged friends. She knew very well the spirit, generosity and love for the poor of Ozanam.

Sister Rosalie had the joy of seeing the first brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul meet several times in her house on L'Épée de Bois and feel the fire of charity being fanned and spread. Young people came in groups or individually to her house to seek advice, guidance, and then to be messengers of charity. Through her experience she guided the apostolate of this group, she was their advisor. She was the one who conceived the idea that the Saint Vincent de Paul Conference would unfold so that the charity would spread to other places, since from the beginning it was destined to functions among the schoolmates and that is how it worked for two years. Having overcome the obstacles to this idea, its members decided to follow that intuition. The work began to spread everywhere.

The virtues that Sister Rosalie practiced during her life were: faith, hope, charity, strength, justice, poverty, chastity and obedience.

She died, literally exhausted by the 54 years spent in the service of the poor, on February 7, 1856. Her grave, in the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris, is constantly visited always adorned with flowers. There is an inscription that says: To the kind mother, Sister Rosalie, her grateful friends, the poor and the rich.

In the neighborhood where she lived, which she loved and helped so much, an avenue bears her name: "*Sor Rosalía*".

BLESSED MARCO ANTONIO DURANDO

Marco Antonio Durando was born in Mondovi (CN-Italy) on May 22, 1801 and died in Turin on December 10, 1880. Two of his brothers pursued military and political careers, as exponents of the first phase of the Italian Renaissance.

Marco Antonio became a missionary of Saint Vincent de Paul to join the mission in China. However, he dedicated himself to preaching in the popular missions in his homeland. Later called to assume the position of Superior (1831) of the Missionaries and of Provincial (1837), he assumed this office until his death. A tireless worker, he introduced in Italy the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul (1833). He founded the House of Mercy, a true center for the assistance of the poor of Turin, sent Missionary Fathers and Sisters to Crimea, to assist wounded or sick soldiers.

In 1865, he founded the Nazarene Sisters, entrusting them to the Servant of God, Luigia Borgiotti (1802-1873). The mortal remains of Father Durando rest in the Church of the Visitation, in Turin. The cause of his beatification was introduced in Rome in 1941.



BLESSED GHEBRE MICHAEL



Of Ethiopian origin, he was born in a village in Goyam. He spent several years of his youth investigating the truth; he was passionate about study and contemplation, meaning that he chose to reach the knowledge of the true God. Providence put at his side the example, help and self-denial of Giustino de Jacobis, whom he professed deep veneration.

In 1841, he went to Rome, with a commission for the Roman Pontiff. In 1844, he publicly professed the faith, loaded with chains and in jail. The years that follow were devoted to prayer, the instruction of Catholics and learned controversies, producing stupendous results.

On January 1, 1851, he received his priestly ordination at the hands of Bishop Giustino de Jacobis, priest of the Mission, who affirmed from Ghebra: "Who is more worthy of him than the Holy Orders? I judge myself, then, happy to have promoted as the first his elevation to priestly dignity".

He died while walking loaded with chains on July 13, 1855. His beatification took place on October 3, 1926. His feast is celebrated on August 30. He is called the holy confessor of the faith.

BLESSED MARTYRS OF ANGERS: SISTER MARIE ANNE VAILLOT AND SISTER ODILE BAUMGARTEN

On February 1, 1794, they were shot in Angers for having refused to take the schismatic oath. In a field on the outskirts of the city, they were executed together with ninety-seven other people. The long procession of the condemned was preceded by a group of doubtful subjects, dressed in rags and many of them drunk, and by a marching band that was playing revolutionary songs.



The condemned were lined up in front of large pits, into which their bodies should fall. The Sisters at the end of the chain stepped forward. Upon seeing them, a cry was heard: Grace to the Sisters! The movement raised was so irresistible that the commander yielded to it. Spontaneously, he advanced towards the Sisters and told them: "Citizens: you still have time to escape death. Return to your homes. Do not take the oath, since it opposes you, I take on myself the responsibility of saying that you have. borrowed and I give you my word that nothing bad will happen to you or to your companions who are imprisoned".

"Thank you, - answered Sister Marie Anne - for your generous offer. Our conscience does not allow us to take the oath. And we do not want to pass for having done it".

The officer was silent and then, with a gesture of desperate helplessness, raised his saber, signaling for the shooting to begin.

SISTER MARIE ANNE VAILLOT

She was born on May 13, 1736 in Fontainebleau and was baptized the same day by a Priest of the Mission, Father Francis Brunet. His father died a few months after her birth.

Marie Anne knew suffering from a very young age. At the age of 27 she began her postulancy with the Daughters of Charity and on September 25, 1761 she entered the Seminary in Paris. It was destined for Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, Fontenay-le-Comte, Vandréé, Longué and Saint-Pierre Montlimart. On the date she arrived in Angers, destined for the Saint John Hospital, is unknown. At the time of her arrest she was responsible for the pantry of the Hospital San Juan de Angers.

SISTER ODILE BAUMGARTEN

She was born on November 19, 1750 in Gongrexange, Lorraine, France. She was baptized the next day. Two sisters and a brother had preceded her in her home; but all three died barely in a year. Odile was a great joy to her family. At the age of 24 she left the family mill for the postulancy she did in Metz. She entered the seminary of the Daughters of Charity on August 4, 1775. Destined for Brest in 1776, she left for Angers early the following year. She was soon entrusted with responsibility for the pharmacy at San Juan Hospital. These two sisters were shot on February 1, 1794 in the Field of the Martyrs, in Avrille. On February 19, 1984, they were beatified along with ninety-nine other martyrs by Pope John Paul II. Her feast is celebrated on February 1st.

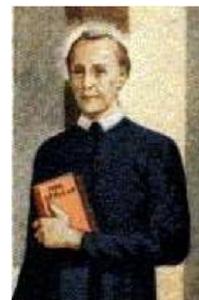
MISSIONARY MARTYRS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BLESSED LOUIS JOSEPH FRANCOIS 1751-1792

He was born on February 3, 1751 in Busigny, France.

He studied for the priesthood at the Congregation of the Mission.

Being already a priest of the Mission, he held the office of Secretary General of the Congregation, he also directed the Seminary of San Fermín, in Paris, known formerly with the name of Bons Enfants and finally exercised the parish ministry.



For refusing to swear to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he was thrown out of a window on September 3, 1792.

JEAN HENRI GRUYER 1734-1792



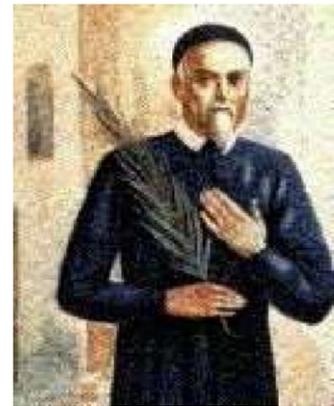
Born in Dole on June 13, 1734, he entered the Congregation of the Mission and was ordained a priest at St. Cloud. His main ministerial dedication was developed around the formation of the clergy.

He died crossed by a sword, the same day and year as his companion and brother of the Congregation, Louis Joshep Francois. They are beatified on October 17, 1926.

PIERRE RENE ROGUE 1758-1796

He was born in Vannes, France, on June 11, 1758. He was the youngest of the three. He entered the Congregation of the Mission and was ordained on September 12, 1782. He worked in the formation of the clergy and in parish work.

After a few months in prison and mistreatment, endured with patience and good spirits serving as support to other faithful, he died beheaded on March 3, 1796. He was beatified on May 10, 1934.



The feast of the three martyrs is celebrated on September 2.

VENERABLE SISTER MARTA ANNA WIECKA (1874-1904)

Born on January 12, 1874 in Nowy Wiec, on Polish soil, in the area then occupied by Prussia, she belonged to a well-off family.

She entered with the Daughters of Charity of the Krakow province in 1893. Her first destination was the Leopoli Hospital, where about 1,000 sick people resided and 50 Sisters worked. For most of her life she worked as a nurse, standing out for her competence, professionalism, sociability, dedication, patience, availability and, in addition, all those moments impregnated with prayer to ask God for a cure or a conversion. None of his patients died without being reconciled to God. A true teacher of humanity and messenger of faith.



She died in 1904, while she was stationed at Sniatyn Hospital. On May 18, 2006, the Medical Consultation of the Congregation of Saints declared itself in favor of recognizing a miracle attributed to Venerable Sister Marta: a total, lasting and scientifically inexplicable cure. Her cause for beatification remains open.

VENERABLE SISTER GIUSEPPINA NICOLI (1863-1924)



Affectionately called “sister smile”, she was born in Casatisma (Pavia) on November 18, 1863, the fifth of ten children. On September 24, 1883, she entered the house of San Salvario in Turin, the Central House of the Daughters of Charity. More than half of Sister Nicoli's apostolic life took place in Sardegna, in the dioceses of Sassari and Cagliari. She always dedicated herself to evangelization and service to the poor, giving herself totally for the

good of the people of Sardegna, in a historically very difficult time.

Tenderness and humility had characterized her Vincentian charism, especially in the evangelization of abandoned and orphaned children. In Cagliari she had an important role in promoting the Association of the Sons of Mary among the men and she was also Director of the Association of the Daughters of Mary, which she led with great zeal and solicitude. She was also a good advisor in working with the laity. She died at the age of 61, on May 31, 1924, after a few months of illness. On April 28, 2006, the Holy Father Benedict XVI authorized the promulgation of the Decree on her heroic virtues, declaring her Venerable.

SISTERS MARTYRS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BLESSED MARTYRS OF ARRAS

These four Daughters of Charity belonged to the community of Arras, known as the martyrs of Cambrai. Guillotine victims of the French Revolution died on June 26, 1794, for refusing to swear to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, like so many other religious and lay people of his time. The guillotine, at that time, was erected in Cambrai and on June 25, 1794, orders were given to the director of the prison to quickly send the Sisters to that city.



They arrived on the 26th, very early and shortly after they were led to the scaffold.

Before going up there, Sister Madeleine Fontaine repeated what had already been said several times: "we will be the last victims". This prophecy, which made Commissioner Lebon laugh, was fulfilled to the letter: they were in Cambrai, the last victims. Death surprised them in full service to the poor. They were:

- Marie Madeleine Fontaine: Born on April 22, 1723 in Etnepagny, she was a Daughter of Charity since July 9, 1748.
- Marie Françoise Lanel: Born on August 24, 1745 in the United States, she was a Daughter of Charity since April 10, 1764.
- Therese Madeleine Fantou: Born on July 27, 1747 in Miniac-Morvan, she entered the Seminary of Paris on November 28, 1771.

- Juana Gerard: Born in Cimieres on October 23, 1752, she joined the Company on September 17, 1776.

The simultaneous beatification of all these martyrs took place on June 13, 1920. Their feast is celebrated on June 26.

BLESSED SISTER LINDALVA JUSTO DE OLIVEIRA (1953-1993)



Young Brazilian Daughter of Charity, born on October 20, 1953 in a very poor area of the State of Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil), comes from a poor family, but rich in faith and Christian practice. She joined the Daughters of Charity of the province of Recife in 1988. Since 1991 she has served the poor with great dedication and dedicated herself especially to the elderly of a communal hospital in Salvador de Bahia.

She was stabbed to death while serving food to the sick, on Good Friday, April 9, 1993. She received the palm of martyrdom for having defended her virginity, relating the sacrifice of her life to that of the first Martyr Christ the Lord. The Holy Father, on

December 16, 2006, authorized the promulgation of the Decree declaring her a Martyr. She will be the first Brazilian woman, belonging to a religious order, to be beatified, on the feast of Christ the King in 2007. In the case of a martyr, a miracle is not needed for her beatification. Her life speaks to us of the beauty of giving our youthful energies to the service of Christ in the poor.

PRACTICE

1. What do you think about the life of Saints?

2. What is to be a witness of Christ? What consequences does it have?

3. How should we be prophets and witnesses of Christ today?

4. What can you do from the branch you serve God?

5. What does it mean to be Christian and Vincentian today?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 6 VINCENTIAN VOCATION

The word vocation comes from the Latin *vocāre*; which means to call. It is the inclination and interest that a person feels towards a way of life or a job; it is the desire to undertake a career, profession or any other activity when all the necessary skills or knowledge have not yet been acquired.



In theology, the vocation is an inspiration by which God calls a person, for a certain state or way of life.

Without denying human motivations, in every authentic vocation the initiative is always God's; insofar as it is a call from God, it is always faithful, it tends to be final and irrevocable. Only God can enter the life of man with a loving voice and propose a destiny that affects and compromises his entire life.

The vocation expresses in a very general way, a meeting of two freedoms:

- The absolute freedom of God who calls - Human freedom that responds to that call.

VOCATION TO LIFE

The first call that is made to us is to be a reflection, to be an image to be an example: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1: 27).

The first vocation or invitation to each of us is to be the image and likeness of God, for that we were created, so that everyone who sees us can see the loving and kind face of the creator.

Have you ever wondered what God does the other discover when he sees me: God who judges, who does not forgive, who is always aware of what we do to condemn? Or on the contrary, does He see through you a God of forgiveness, comfort, or love?

When we are born, each one of us, however humble our origins and the positions we occupy in life, we come into the world as part of the project of the Good God in the history of salvation, that is, no person appears on earth meaningless and without motivation; for each one, the Lord has plans, he endows us with some faculties, giving us at the same time the possibility of attending to them or rejecting them. God, in his

infinite goodness, respects the freedom of each person but, at the same time, dreams that each one can discover, of surrendering to the mission that He has entrusted to us.

LAY VOCATION AND CHRISTIAN VOCATION

When we understand that our vocation is to be love, to live love and to bring that BEING of love to others, we dedicate our lives to knowing him to love him and to become one with him so that we can bring him to others, and in what other way can we present that God of love but through a deep knowledge and experience of his Gospel?

From that knowledge of God our Christian vocation derives, we choose to live our faith within a specific church and that vocation we live as lay people "Men of the church in the heart of the world and men of the world in the heart of the church" (Puebla 7160).

Aporecida reminds us that we are all church, summoned by Christ to give witness to the whole world; as baptized, we must become aware that baptism configured us with Christ: priest, prophet and King.

He challenges us to feel that we are co-responsible in building society according to the criteria of the Gospel, with enthusiasm and audacity, in communion with our pastors (*Aporecida*, inaugural address by His Holiness Benedict XVI).

As we can see, the lay vocation cannot be separated from the Christian vocation, from that call that Christ makes us to follow him. That call does not depend on us, it comes from God who calls us by name, called us before we were created: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1: 5).



The vocation is personal and non-transferable, for each individual who must fulfill it, each one receives it, from within and from their concrete and historical reality, so that they contribute their unique and personal being to the common vocation of loving and cultivating life and building a more human world.

VINCENTIAN VOCATION

As Jeremiah said we were consecrated to be prophets, we are called by God to carry his message. But the vocation does not only imply being prophets; through baptism we are also priests and kings.

Priests: to speak to God of men, through prayer. We must begin by speaking to God about men, rather than speaking to men about God.

Prophets: to speak to the men of God through the apostolate and evangelization.

Kings: to be Christs on earth, to live with the love and humility of Jesus, keeping in mind that to be a King is to be a servant.

We Vincentians feel that call to serve the poor within a community of faith that prays and acts together; as Saint Vincent de Paul invites us: "Serving the poor is serving Jesus Christ himself".

In this community of prayer and action, the different Vincentian branches serve not only the poor but also our brothers who make up each ministry or branch. We serve Christ himself whom we try to discover in each one of the needy brothers we personally meet.

This Vincentian vocation has specific characteristics:

Our vocation demands of us a clear **COMMUNITY OF FAITH** and teamwork, in which we receive and can give. The Vincentian vocation is the vocation of action. The spirituality of action is the organization from the individual into the community, according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and, apt to assume specific human situations, in which the experience of God and his service are fulfilled with the experience and service through the action.

Our vocation leads us to **FIND THE POOR**; to identify them in their suffering and to be able to respond to the challenges imposed on us by accompanying them in the search for their dignity. For this reason, it is necessary to live constant training to face new threats.

A vocation that is not located in the context of an experience of faith risks becoming a kind of religious metaphysics, a wheel that "turns in the air without starting the car". The son of God gives Vincentian Spirituality its Christ-centered character, Saint Vincent advances in this line of the incarnation, because Christ not only became man but also became poor, because not only did he come to save, but he especially came to save the disinherited of the Earth. Saint Vincent will dedicate himself to the spiritual and material evangelization of the poor, his option for them more than preferential, was exclusive.

Our vocation requires us to do it personally and **IN THE PLACE OF THE POOR**. In that place where they live or subsist, in their usual place. Vincent simply tells us: "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the sweat of our brow.

For many times, the acts of love of God, of complacency, of benevolence, and other similar affections and interior practices of a loving heart, were very suspicious when the practice of effective love is not achieved. The Church is like a great harvest that requires workers, but workers who work. There is nothing so conforming to the Gospel as gathering, on the one hand, light and strength for the soul in prayer, reading and retreat, and, on the other hand, then going to make men partakers of that spiritual food

, this is doing what our Lord did; this is what we have to do and the way we have to show God that we love him: 'What we have to do are works'" (Vincent de Paul, Biography and spirituality. Vincent of God. CM.).

Our vocation requires us to **FEEL AS OWN, THE SUFFERINGS** of those we meet and discover that they are nothing but the near manifestation of the suffering that is universal.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on human pain, "*Salvifici Doloris*", makes us a profound reflection on the Good Samaritan: "The Samaritan - he says - proved to be, truly, the 'neighbor' of that unhappy man who fell in the hands of thieves. 'Neighbor' also means the one who fulfills the commandment of love of neighbor... It is not lawful for us to 'walk past' with indifference, but we must 'stop' next to the one who suffers. A Good Samaritan, in effect, is every man who stands next to the suffering of another man, whatever it may be. And that stopping does not mean curiosity, but availability. This is like the opening of a certain inner disposition of the heart, which also has its emotional expression" (N. 28).

Our vocation leads us to be aware of our responsibility in **THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL AMONG THE POOR**. To be one of the manifestations of the loving action of the church, for those who on occasions, will have no other vision of it than the one they receive through our mediation. And that manifestation may be our baptismal commitment, in response to the most pressing need in the Holy Church: service to the poor. A service to the poorest, that leads us to collaborate and fight to contribute to the beginning of the Kingdom here and now.

Our vocation leads us to give ourselves to a **CONTINUOUS AND RESPONSIBLE SERVICE**, belonging to the Vincentian Family requires formal commitments, consecration or solemn vows. It is good to feel that what we contracted when we reached a Vincentian branch is a moral commitment to belong to the service of the poorest. Every Vincentian must always keep in mind that our vocation, in addition to being individual, non-transferable and developed in the Church, must be carried out according to our capacities, each one must have a knowledge of himself, to determine where and how to serve better.



PRACTICE

1. What is vocation for you?

2. What aspects of your life do you have to strength in order to optimize your Vincentian vocation?

3. What “face” of God does the poor discover in you?

4. What service can you make as a Vincentian to promote the human dignity, specially the poor dignity?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 7 VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

The word spirituality comes from "spirit".

Part of the theology that studies the dynamism that the spirit produces in the life of the soul, how it is born, grows, develops, until it reaches the holiness to which God calls us from all eternity, and transmit it to others with the word, the witness of life and with the effective apostolate.

Therefore, theological doctrine and Christian experience are sought. If we only opted for



theological doctrine, taking away the experience, we would have a rational, intellectual spirituality with no repercussions on our own life. And if we only opted for the Christian experience, without giving theological doctrine, spirituality would be reduced to

subjectivism arbitrary, subject to changing fashions and exposed to error. Thus, true Christian spirituality must integrate doctrine and life, principles, and experience.



When it is said that the spirit of our Lord is in such a person or in such works, how is it understood? Is it that the same Holy Spirit has been poured out on them? Yes, the Holy Spirit, regarding a person, is poured out on the righteous and dwells personally in them. When it is said that the Holy Spirit acts on a person, it means that this spirit, by dwelling in him, gives him the same inclinations and dispositions that Jesus Christ had and these make him act according to the measure of the gifts of this Spirit.

There are different spiritualities, each one of them has its "own well" a specific experience, made by specific people living a specific time. Simultaneous experience, proper and communicable to others, an experience that gives birth to a way of being Christian, to a spirituality.

The Spirituality of the Catholic Church tries to be balanced between doctrine and experience, between theory and practice, between contemplation and apostolate.

VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY

"Vincentian Spirituality is the spirituality of action".

As far as we are concerned, Saint Vincent drank from the well of the poor, the poor people of the countryside who "are starving" because society only thinks of them in order to deprive them and who runs the risk of being condemned because the church at that time they have abandoned his misfortune and this specific situation cannot be solved only with prayer and contemplation, they necessarily requires the effort of the arms and the sweat of the forehead, as Saint Vincent says. This is the reason of being of the Vincentian Spirituality.

The spirituality of action is the organization of individual Christian existence according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and capable of assuming specific human situations, in which the experience of God and his service are fulfilled with the experience and service of men through the action.

It can be assured that the dogmatic basis of Vincentian Spirituality is the mystery of the Incarnation, that is the Son of God on earth, as Saint Vincent liked to say, the Son of God united to the Trinity, in his relationships with the Father, who sends it and the Holy Spirit who communicates it; on earth he links him to the poor, because for them he came, for them he preached the kingdom.

A spirituality that is not located in the context of an experience of faith risks becoming a kind of religious metaphysics, in a wheel that "turns in the air without making the chariot go". The son of God gives Vincentian Spirituality its character Christ-centered, Saint Vincent advances in this line of the incarnation, because Christ not only became man but also became poor, because not only did he come to save, but he especially came to save the disinherited on Earth. Saint Vincent dedicated himself to the spiritual and material evangelization of the poor, his option for them more than preferential, was exclusive: salvation for all, evangelization for the poor.

Vincentian Spirituality focuses on Christ and the poor, and what distinguishes it, since Christ and the poor are evangelical "common places", is passion, let us put it this way with the spirit of Saint Vincent he feels called and launched to them: "They are my weight and my pain".

If we are Christians and we know that the central thing is to follow Christ, and it is Christ who became flesh, he is God made man, he is the human face of God. Jesus Christ is the only way, the only legitimate way open to man of access to God. You have no other and you must not forget that this is the decisive difference between the Christian faith and all other religions.

At the base of the spirituality of Saint Vincent is the mission, the commitment to follow Christ, in the specific aspect of fulfilling the will of the Father by announcing the Good

News to the poor. Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, discover the mission in the events of life guided by providence. Spirituality must express itself as a way of being, as an inspiration that filters through and guides all of life and its manifestations. As in our founders, the ideal presence of the poor must illuminate and guide the attitude and action of his followers; it must be a spirit, a constant concern, a note that emerges clearly both in the life of prayer and in the life of community. Vincent discovered spirituality simply like this: "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the sweat of our brow. For many times, the acts of love of God, of complacency, of benevolence, and other similar affections and interior practices of a loving heart, were very suspicious when the practice of effective love is not achieved". The church is like a great harvest that requires workers, but workers who work. There is nothing so conforming to the gospel as gathering, on the one hand, light, and strength for the soul in prayer, reading and retreat, and, on the other hand, then going to make men partakers of that spiritual food, this is doing what our Lord did. This is what we must do and the way we must show God what we love: "What we have to do are works" (Vincent de Paul, Biography, and spirituality. Vincent of God. CM.).

Vincentian Spirituality, in the first place, is not about quotes from the Holy Founder, or about prayers, virtues, works, or acts of piety. It is about the following of Jesus among the poorest and most excluded. Of course, all these things have their place, but only to the extent that they help us to follow Jesus, evangelizer of the poor.

VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY'S CHARACTERISTICS

1. GOD TAKES US TO THE WORLD

In Jesus, God inserted himself into the world as our brother and savior. He does not save us from above or from without, but from humanity.

We do not bring Christ into the world! Rather, He takes us into the world. The world is God's creation, the place of his grace, the place of our salvation. Separating or trying to escape from the world is not Vincentian. Of course, there is sin in the world, things that hide God's presence, that disfigure his image. But, as Saint Paul said where sin abounds, grace abounds more.

Vincentian Spirituality is a commitment to the world. The world's problems are our problems. The sufferings and weaknesses of our sinful brothers are not alien.

We may not have all the answers to all problems. However, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the other pilgrims to question the reality of today's world. The task here is to be more human.

We enter the world as bearers of the Gospel. Evangelizing is not just catechizing and celebrating worship. Rather, it is liberation from all evil that oppresses humanity. It is

creating the possibility of new relationships with God the Father and with others as brothers and sisters.

The Good News of the Gospel is an experience of transformation in your situation of evil. Evangelization begins as a response to the bad news that people suffer hunger, unemployment, injustice, conflict, violence, meaninglessness and poverty.

2. GOD IS WAITING FOR US AMONG THE POOR

When Christ invites us to follow him, he does so from the poor. And from the poor we must answer: Who is God? Who are the poor? How do we relate to them?

This is the main axis of our spirituality. We offer three clarifications:

- a) The poor have value in themselves. We do not go to the poor just because Christ is present there. We go to the poor because they are my suffering brothers and sisters. They are the priority of the kingdom of God. I serve the poor for their personal dignity. They are subjects of their own life, not recipients of pity and alms.
- b) Christ calls us to serve the poor, not just the good poor. The call is to serve the poor, good and bad. We cannot limit our service to ask if people are worthy or not, even the crooks evangelize us. They call us to love the unlovable. They put us in touch with our own sin and weakness and invite us to be compassionate.
- c) The presence of Christ is sacramental. Saint Vincent speaks of finding Christ in the poor, he rarely speaks of seeing Christ in the poor. The presence of Christ is sacramental, not physical.

It reflects faith on the encounter with the poor. We only have evidence of the presence of Christ after the encounter with the poor.

3. CHRIST INVITES US TO THE MISSION

Following Christ among the poor means being a missionary. The missionary spirit is not the desire to walk. Jumping from place to place is probably more of an obstacle to the mission than a positive thing.

To be a missionary is to leave your world, your safe place, to enter the world of the other. It is allowing to be a space to enter the space of the poor, to accompany with the Gospel. It is a difficult task. We are people from the center, economically and socially speaking. The poor live in the peripheries where there is another reality, other values, another culture, another religious expression. The change is not necessarily geographic. To be a missionary is to adapt to the reality of the poor, with humility to listen and accompany without commanding. The simplicity of understanding my true motives in the mission. Mortification to sacrifice something of mine for the good of the poor. The meekness to handle culture shocks. Charity and evangelical zeal expressed in the desire to enter a new world.

4. CHRIST SITS WITH US IN PRAYER.

Saint Vincent speaks of being contemplatives in action, he means that we must let Christ and his Gospel illuminate the situations of life. It is the personal dialogue with Christ about what I experience among the poor: the signs of the kingdom and antikingdom, my inner and personal reactions, the community indications.

Prayer is not something we do for God. It is something He does for us. In dialogue he makes us more sensitive to his presence and his movement in history

5. CHRIST MAKES US ABLE TO BE CHARITABLE

The goal of Christian spirituality is love. For Vincentian Spirituality this is specified in communicating mercy and solidarity with the excluded.

Saint Vincent talks a lot about providence. It is not Christian good luck. Providence is God's desire to save his children from evil. Everything is in your hands. He always wants to realize new possibilities of life: fraternity, organization, justice, forgiveness, etc. We share what we have received from God, his mercy. So even when things do not go well, providence is there. Christ and his followers always seek the good of their brothers and sisters and offer the hope of something new.



PRACTICE

1. In what is centered the Vincentian Spirituality?

2. Which is the dogmatic base of the Vincentian Spirituality?

3. Name all the characteristics of Vincentian Spirituality

4. What inner motivation does the word of Saint Vincent de Paul create in you?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 8 VINCENTIAN VIRTUES

The cultivation and practice of these virtues must be endeavored very carefully, since they are like the powers of the soul and they must animate the actions of each member of the Vincentian Family in which they keep us faithful in following Jesus Christ.

Virtues that help us to be clothed with the strength that emanates from the spirit of God in the face of any obstacle that prevents us from fully living the vocation to which we have been called. As we know, the characteristic virtues are values of the Gospel that Saint Vincent contemplates, especially in Jesus Christ, and that he felt the need to understand and put into practice throughout his life.

SIMPLICITY

Saint Vincent said, "it is the virtue that I love the most", so much so that "I call it my gospel". "I have special devotion and comfort in saying things as they are". These words can help us identify simplicity in its real meaning as truth, sincerity, transparency. Living simplicity fully will help us avoid being false, saying one thing and meaning another, or saying one thing to someone's face and another behind their back.

We are called to be simple, to say things as they are, but we must add always with sincerity to the other. As Saint Vincent tells us, it is the freedom to speak to others "with full confidence, without hiding or disguising anything".

There are situations that require truly living simplicity: when friends sit and talk, even about difficult subjects. Furthermore, it must also be present in those who want to commit themselves to the following of Jesus Christ in the Vincentian Family.

HUMILITY

Saint Vincent calls it the characteristic virtue of the mission. "Oh, holy virtue, how beautiful you are! Oh, little Company, how kind you will be if the Lord grants you this grace"! He also calls it: "The virtue of Jesus Christ of his holy mother of the greatest saints, is the virtue of missionaries".

Humility is the virtue that enables us to recognize and admit our weaknesses and limitations, thus creating the possibility of trusting more in God and less in ourselves.

At the same time, humility enables us to recognize our talents, which must be put at the service of others.

It is the virtue that allows the poor to come closer to us; that helps us to see that we are all equal in the eyes of God. It enables us, at the same time, to reach out to the poor.

In opposition to the humble, there are certainly the proud of heart, people with an attitude of "I am better than the other", who look down on others. Humility is a virtue that enables Vincentians to enculturate themselves in service and evangelization with the poor.

As Saint Vincent says elsewhere, it is a "perfect abandonment of all that you are or can be" with trust in Him who is our only Lord, Jesus Christ.

Once again, if they take hold of humility, they will make the Vincentian Family a paradise and people will notice how happy we are.



CHARITY

The third and greatest of the Divine virtues listed by Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 13: 13), is charity that defines it as a divinely infused habit, which inclines the human being to love God for himself above all things, and man for the love of God. It is a virtue based on divine faith or belief in the truth of God's revelation. It is conferred only by divine grace, not by mere human effort. Because it is infused with sanctifying grace, it is often identified with the state of grace. Therefore, whoever has lost the supernatural virtue of charity has lost the state of grace, even though he still possesses the virtues of faith and hope. Charity does not first of all mean the act or the beneficent feeling, but rather the spiritual gift, the love of God that the Holy Spirit instills in the human heart and that leads us to give ourselves in turn to God and our neighbor (Benedict XVI, Sept 25, 2005).

It is the third and main of the theological virtues. Charity is the love of God that dwells in the heart of the human being. Charity begins with us and most of the time ends where it begins. It is a must the choice of a right form.

It represents the greatest social commandment. Respect the other and their rights. It requires the practice of justice and is the only one that makes us capable of it. He inspires a life of self-giving: "Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33). To promote human dignity, the Church manifests a preferential love for the poor and marginalized, because the Lord identified himself with them especially (Matthew 25:40). This love does not exclude anyone; it

simply singles out a priority of service, which enjoys the favorable witness of the entire tradition of the Church.

MEEKNESS

Meekness is the vocational virtue, as Saint Vincent himself says, "A kind style wins hearts and attracts them". "If a man cannot be won over by kindness and patience, it will be difficult to get it any other way".



Other words that we can use today in relation to the word meekness, would be generous, courteous, kind, nice. In a sense it is related to humility insofar as it is the virtue that allows the poor to come closer to us. It is the virtue that makes us close.

Meekness is not aggressive, angry, noisy. It is certainly a key virtue in the community. It helps build trust in each other, because when we are kind, those who are shy will open to us. Saint Vincent said: "there are no people more constant and stable in doing good than those who are meek and kind".

A virtue related to meekness is hospitality, which is a characteristic that should distinguish a member of the Vincentian Family, a welcoming person, who is attentive to the needs of others and in particular those who have come from far away.

MORTIFICATION

We are called to die to ourselves. It is the virtue that asks us to give ourselves totally, think first of others, think first especially of the poor, before ourselves.

As Saint Vincent says, "Saints are saints because they follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, they renounce themselves, and they mortify themselves in all things". And as he also says, "prayer and mortification are two sisters so intimately united that one is never without the other".

Fasting means much more than simply depriving yourself of food. It is that traditional Christian practice that helps us to die to ourselves. One of the dangers we easily fall into is wanting to be aware of ourselves to the point of not being willing, at times, to make even a few small sacrifices for others.

Another danger is to think first of my needs, my occupations, and therefore my comfort. There is the danger of not being able to take another step for the other. As Saint Vincent says, the gift of mortification "is only achieved by the repetition of acts".

APOSTOLIC ZEAL

Zeal for souls or passion for humanity. Saint Vincent says that "if the love of God is fire, zeal is flame". It is the consequence of a truly compassionate heart. It is about passion for Christ, passion for humanity, and passion especially for the poor. Zeal is a truly missionary virtue. It is expressed in availability, readiness for service and evangelization even when one is old and sick. Saint Vincent says: "And I myself, old and sick as I am, should not stop being available, yes, even to go to the Indies to win souls for Christ". Related to zeal is enthusiasm, which calls for action. Saint Vincent says: "Let us love God, my brothers but it may be with the effort of our arms and the sweat of our brow". We can understand jealousy as a concrete expression of effective love, which is motivated by compassion or, in other words, affectionate love. As our Saint affirms: "imagine that there are millions of souls reaching out to you and calling you by name".





PRACTICE

1. Which are the Vincentian virtues?

2. What is simplicity for Saint Vincent de Paul?

3. What is meekness and how can we Vincentians practice it?

4. What is the virtue of apostolic zeal?

5. Who can we practice the Vincentian virtues towards the poor from the different branches?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 9 THE POOR

POVERTY CAUSES IN MODERN SOCIETY

A few years ago, poverty was caused by a lack of services, technology, infrastructure and means of production. It was thought that there were poor people because resources were not enough for everyone, but that over time this would be compensated when countries reached development.

Unfortunately, at present the levels of poverty have increased, because the development of the countries has been uneven and the gap between one and the other is increasing every day. Developed countries grow in technology that allows them to live with a better quality of life, while the poor lack income. For these reasons, poverty is not the result of the scarcity of resources but of their misallocation

SECTORS OF CURRENT SOCIETY

Thus, three socio-economic sectors appear within society:

The integrated sector: It is made up of people who profit from the system with a well-paid job, have access to education and health, and therefore enjoy a good standard of living.



The threatened sector: It is made up of the middle class, people who have fixed-term employment

contracts, regular salary levels, whose children, despite receiving a good education, cannot find work and are at risk of being permanently unemployed. These families are unable to develop their life project.

The excluded sector: These people are out of the labor force without hope of entering it again, either due to lack of training or because of their age. These families are getting poorer every day and therefore their social status and family life is deteriorating. They earn their survival with informal employment and some family micro-businesses, which represent insufficient income to have a good quality of life and access to an adequate education.

NEW POVERTIES



As a result of the economic decompensation, different types of poverty have appeared that we must identify:

- a) People without work with a series of consequences: low self-esteem of the individual, deterioration of family relationships, emotional changes in the individual and his family (depression, anxiety), in many cases change of the family structure by having to seek temporary refuge with their families and in most of the cases resentment between family members.
- b) Displacement of the father to other countries or regions to access job opportunities. The family loses its head, this generates depression in the mother and children, lacking authority, in many cases adolescents fall into alcohol or drugs or young women seek to make a family and early pregnancies occur. The father often starts another family.
- c) New dependencies. Many of them generated by the communication that comes from developed countries in different media such as TV, cinema, internet. Addiction to liquor, drugs, and gambling have taken effect at different social levels and have had results such as impoverishment of the family, intrafamily violence and, in general, a progressive degradation of the individual.
- d) Abandonment of the elderly. Previously, the elderly were part of the family, currently they are displaced from the family circle and those with better luck are interned in specialized institutions where they receive the care of third parties and are visited by their families very sporadically. The lower-income classes in many cases leave the elderly in the care of the state and strip them of their belongings.
- e) Displacement due to violence. In some of our countries, the population living in the poorest neighborhoods must continually move due to threats from armed groups. Also in the countryside, due to the confrontation of the various powers and the depletion of the lands, the peasants are forced to come to the city and inhabit the rings of misery that results in a change in their customs, the maladjustment of the parents and their children and their entry into criminal groups as they did not find alternatives to acquire the means for their subsistence.
- f) Poor shameful. Together with the poor who have always exist, today we find the increase of families that have had comforts and now lack them. It is the most difficult poor to attend because it is generally depressed and becomes a rebel. As it is not used to “searching” and has many prejudices in front of the community, it prefers to suffer needs but to appear not to have them.

WHY SHOULD WE SERVE THE POOR?

From our faith: throughout the Old Testament, God revealed himself as the protector of the poor. In Judith 9:11 it is expressed: “Your power does not depend on the size

and strength of an army. You are a God who cares for the humble and helps the oppressed. You give support and protection to people who are weak and helpless; you save those who have lost hope". That is why when Jesus announces the arrival of the Good News, he chooses the poor to receive it: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4,18).

Also in the Gospel he identifies himself as one of them when he says: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25,40).

Through the Social Encyclicals, the church invites us to care for those in need: "With the passing of the years and the progressive spread of the church, the exercise of charity was confirmed as one of its essential areas, together with the administration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the Word: practicing love towards widows and orphans, prisoners, the sick and the needy of all kinds, belongs to its essence as much as the service of the sacraments and the proclamation of the Gospel" (God is Love. Benedict XVI).

Pope Francis has taken the option for the poor as a priority: "As you know, there are several reasons why I chose my name thinking of Francis of Assisi, a personality who is well known beyond the confines of Italy and Europe and also among those who do not profess the catholic faith".

Hence the face of Christ according to Vincent de Paul: the servant. We are all called to follow him on the path of this service. The gift in its pure, radical state, acts in everyday life by the same movement of the heart: serving the poor is serving God! For this there is only to look at Jesus Christ himself. He is the incarnate Word of God, a man among men, who dedicates time to prayer, who lives in a state of permanent communication with his father: "I and the Father are one" (John 10: 30). But he is also the one who serves men day after day with limitless dedication: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Matthew 9,35).

Jesus is in an attitude of service and asks his own Luke 12: 35 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning", and calling us "servants", a word that appears 76 times in the four Gospels. His example culminates with the washing of the feet: "I But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22: 27). He gives the testimony of one who lowers himself to the smallest in front of his immediate surroundings and strips himself of all superiority, of all divine pretenses, to put himself in a service plan and wash the feet of his apostles, a gesture normally reserved for the slave. Saint Vincent says: "What has impressed me the most about what was said today and last Friday, is what has been indicated about our Lord, who was the natural lord of the whole world and which was done however last of all, the disgrace and abjection of all men, always

occupying the last place in any place found. Perhaps you believe, my brothers, that a man is very humble and that he has lowered himself a lot when he has occupied the last place. So what? Does a man humble himself by occupying the place of our Lord? Yes, my brothers, the place of our Lord is last. He who wishes to command cannot have the spirit of our Lord; this Divine Savior has not come into the world to be served, but to serve others; and this he practiced marvelously, not only during the time that he was with his parents and with the people whom he served for a living, but even, as many parents have pointed out, during the time that the apostles were with him, serving them with their own hands, washing their feet and making them rest from their fatigue” (SVP, XI, 59).

SERVING OUR VINCENTIAN VOCATION

Saint Vincent de Paul spoke thus to his sons and daughters: “How true this is! You serve Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And this is as true as we are here. A Vincentian will go ten times a day to see the poor and ten times a day he will find God in them”.

Saint Augustine says, “What we see is not so sure, because our senses can be deceived; but the truths of God never deceive”.

Paraphrasing Saint Vincent, we can say: “Go see the poor migrants without shelter or food and in them you will find God and in each of the poverties where a member of the VINFAM carries out his mission of evangelization and of exercising charity through a corporal and spiritual service”.

Pope John Paul II writes about Frederick Ozanam: “Ozanam from his youth became aware that it was not enough to talk about charity and the mission of the Church in the world: this had to be translated into an effective commitment of Christians to the service of the poor and with a group of friends he created one of the branches of the *VINFAM* the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul whose objective was to help the poorest”.

At present the purpose of each of the branches is to meet in fraternity in the light of the teachings of the Gospel and the Vincentian Charism to carry out their apostolate in the Service of the Poor; as good Samaritans to help the wounded we meet on the road of life.

PRACTICE

1. Name the two kinds of poverty and define them

2. Which is the main cause of poverty in nowadays society?

3. In which document can we find the church invitation to serve the ones in need?

4. What is our branch ready to do in order to serve our poor brothers?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 10 COMMITMENT WITH THE POOR

WHAT IS COMMITMENT?

Commitment, strictly speaking, is the act by which a person consciously and freely assumes the situation. According to this definition, the commitment has three elements:

- a. Taking a position, that is not simply becoming aware of a situation, but rather assuming it.
- b. A conscious and freewill, that is an act in which the person himself is involved in a conscious and freewill.
- c. A personal action that transforms the situation.

TYPES OF COMMITMENT

We are going to distinguish three types of commitments:

1. Act commitment and behavior commitment.
2. Educational commitment and managerial commitment.
3. Political commitment and commitment in the political issues.



An act commitment is one in which the situation requires an act from the person, without the person feeling personally involved.

For example, when a beggar asks me for a favor and I give him a handout, I do an act that changes his situation, but personally I do not feel involved in his situation. On the other hand, in the behavior commitment the situation questions and questions the person first, and from that questioning arises the action, example: If it is a brother of mine who asks me for a favor, I am not content simply to do something for him, but personally I feel involved in his situation.

The educational commitment is the one that fundamentally seeks that the person assumes a situation himself. It seeks to touch above all the conscience and freedom of the person, without directly wanting to change or organize the society or the institution. Management commitment is one that directly seeks to change the structures, or the organization of the society or the institution. Power is always required for its achievement. Only those who have power can change the structures, whether of an institution or of society.

In political commitment, the person takes a position in the face of the society situation and takes actions that directly seek change from their way of thinking. This

commitment can also be called partisan commitment because the actions that lead to change society always require a party or something that plays the same role. On the other hand, commitment in political issues takes a position in the face of society's problems without directly seeking change in society, on the one hand, because it lacks the means of power to do so and, on the other, because the purpose of this commitment is to critique society, not the seizure of power. This is the typical commitment of trade unions, for example, a union takes a position on the problems of society but does not have the means to change things.

Each of these commitments has its own value: the politician puts into practice the ideas and opinions he has and can produce social change. The commitment in political issues has a critical sense, but not a directive one. In a way it could be said that one supports the other, because the ruler easily loses his critical sense, since self-criticism is very poor and limited, because when it is exaggerated, it also impoverishes action. For this reason, strong criticism is made by the outsider. However, political commitment to be effective must be linked in some way to the commitment in political issues.

WHICH IS THE COMMITMENT WITH THE POOR?

First, it must be said that there is not just one way of committing to the poor, therefore, there are many types of commitment. From the religious point of view, everyone can be enlightened by faith. In this sense, it cannot be said that the only commitment is to carry out social works, or to fight for the change of structures. All can be authentic if it is made with the following conditions:

- a) That it starts from the poor people. That their freedom is not imposed or conditioned.
- b) That it seeks to make the poor a protagonist of their own destiny.
- c) That it is done in a respectful manner, without authoritarianism or sufficiency.

The type of commitment will depend on what is sought through the action. That is why an action cannot be immediately described as "paternalistic", because everything depends primarily on the purpose of the action. No one, for example, calls disaster aid paternalistic.

Work with the poor must take place on two levels. In general, the commitment with the poor must be made from two different perspectives, which are not separable, nor opposed, but different. You can fight for the poor from the perspective of the person, or from the structural perspective.

From the focus in the action on the person itself and from that person fighting for the improvement of the structures. In this action, importance is given primarily to accompaniment, presence, education and organization. From the structural point of view, focusing the action on the fight against the structures that oppress the poor. In this action the primacy is held by the political struggle, the denunciation of oppressive

structures, situations, etc. These two actions (from the person or from the structural perspective), are equally valid and at the same time they are not opposite. When you work for the poor person, you must consider the structural situation and vice versa, when you fight against the structures you must consider the person.

In a way, perhaps too simple, that helps to understand where the work with the poor should be done, one could say in general, that of a "paternalistic commitment" with the poor, in which a solution was sought above all immediate to their situation, regardless of the structural causes, we have moved on to a political commitment, in which the central interest lies in changing society, destroying unjust and oppressive structures, without considering the poor, their way to live and to assume the changes.

This was seen very strongly in the decades of the 60 to the 80. We must bear in mind that this type of commitment with the poor failed because it did not remove them from their poverty-destroying situation. And above all, it did not make them subject to their own development and allowed them to be manipulated.

PROPOSAL FOR WORKING WITH THE POOR

Our proposal is that behavioral commitment should be given primacy, it is necessary that the condition of the poor question every person, both positively and negatively. And this both on the personal level and on the social level.

A personal commitment above the socio-political is essential, without neglecting the political, starting with the personal, helping the poor to be subject. Before seeing how the structures change, we must educate the poor in their values, accompanying them in actions that allow them to live their values and change the structures that oppress them.

The future of the struggle for the poor goes through a reassessment and a rethinking of the value of the poor. In an existential sense, it means letting the poor man interrogate us, question us and not reach them with preconceived schemes. It is also necessary to give priority to political commitment, that people take part in the situation of society, that groups take part and do not simply "suffer" the situation.

The role of popular organizations

Lately, what the poor need the most is to have their identity restored and their dignity as poor recognized. As poor they need the opportunity to say something, and that the rich world is not seen as the ideal for the poor. For this reason, from a practical and methodological point of view, the most effective and necessary in promoting the poor and in the fight for a different society are popular organizations, in which the poor are subject, where they can speak their mind and where they can receive the help of all those who want to commit themselves to its promotion, but without these people taking over the leadership and without taking the role of the poor away.

Organizations where the change of structures is experienced and where intellectuals and other people from other means put their capacities at the service of the poor. And with this budget, to undertake a series of social struggles to improve the conditions of the poor world, with just structures, where these structures seek not that the poor become like the rich, but that they have a framework where they can develop their values and fight against their destruction.

OTHER WAYS TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

1. Live evangelical poverty

It consists of sharing goods with those in need, trying not to have excess. It makes us freer in front of society. It frees us from living pending the possession of things, social prestige or fashion. It leaves us with more free hands to act in the service of the poor. On the other hand, it puts us a little closer to those in need. It allows us to be on their side, to listen to their problems, to transform our hearts, to discover where are the true values of life.

2. Defense of the person.

It is not just about despising science or progress, but about always putting us at the service of people. We are living in a historical moment in which it is necessary to defend the person, as the first value that should not be sacrificed for anything or anyone. Nothing can justify sacrificing the most unfortunate in society, while the rest of us live better.

The easy reaction of society is discrimination, forgetfulness of the unemployed, resentment towards minority groups, defense of citizen security against criminals, etc. But who thinks of those people stripped of the future, stuck in a tunnel with no way out? Christian commitment always means defending people: helping the unemployed, defending those mistreated by society, being with the prisoners, supporting the sinking family. In a word, always seek the good of the person, defend their rights and dignity.

3. Faced an individualistic culture, solidarity

One of the features of today's society is individualism and lack of solidarity. Each one cares about their well-being and their future. It does not matter that everything remains the same if it goes well for me and my family. This is how unsupportive corporatism appears: the rights of the group or sector itself are vindicated

It is urgent to promote a new consciousness inspired by solidarity which, according to John Paul II, is "the firm and persevering determination to strive for the common good; for the good of each and every one, so that we are all truly responsible for all" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38).

This awareness of solidarity requires awakening collective responsibility towards the victims, raising sensitivity to their situation of need, promoting the integration of the

marginalized, developing sharing, criticizing competitiveness as an absolute value. Christian commitment today means to commit to creating another culture, another type of social coexistence.

4. Face social insensitivity, mercy

In modern society, insensitivity and apathy grow. We are very far from that "civilization of love" that Paul VI wanted. The development of technology, the search for efficiency and performance, the bureaucratic organization of services, carry with them the risk of repressing the "civilization of the heart". The tenderness, the affection, the warm welcome to each person is being swept away from society. Many people today live the poverty of affection, of affection, of close love. They are people to whom nobody listens, nobody waits anywhere, nobody caresses and kisses. People who do not count for anyone. Institutions and social services can cover a type of material needs, but they cannot offer friendship, listening, understanding, affection, tenderness.

The Christian commitment is called today to introduce mercy into this society, "put heart" in the gears of modern life, free from loneliness, accompany in depression, alleviate old age, support the life of the helpless.

5. Face fatalism, responsibility and commitment

In a few years, it has gone from optimism to disappointment. Today society is going through a severe crisis of hope, skepticism and pessimism have growth. Sacrifices are asked of people, but the results are not seen. The promises of politicians are no longer believed. Not much is expected of experts. Words and projects are not believed. It is the moment to act in a responsible and committed way, without losing hope. Two convictions must animate us: man has not lost the ability to be more human and to organize society in a more human way. What is needed, is to react and commit in a new direction, freeing ourselves from dehumanizing schemes and mechanisms. On the other hand, the Spirit of God continues to act. Even the poor, who today suffer the consequences of an unhuman society, are "bearers of hope", because their situation is crying out for something new. The important thing is to stay with the victims, support their cause, value their lives as something precious, and commit to their defense.

PRACTICE

1. How is your present commitment with the poor?

2. How are you living your commitment?

3. What is your attitude to the poor world that surrounds you?

4. In your apostleship how have you defend the one in need?

5. Describe with an example the social insensibility in your environment

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 11 VINCENTIAN CHALLENGES

“The challenges we face in life can be compared to a high mountain, rising before a mountaineer. For someone who has not trained properly, whose muscles and reflexes are weak and slow, every inch of the climb will be filled with terror and pain. However, the climbing itself will be an exciting journey for someone who is prepared, whose legs and arms have been strengthened by constant training. With every step you take forward and upward, beautiful new landscapes will appear”.

** The challenges of life are overcome with order, will and perseverance. Life is full of challenges, that motivates us.*



The first challenge of the Vincentian Christian is to live faithful to Jesus, to the commitment he received in baptism, to know how to live this fidelity in the midst of this world as it is and to form a community of missionary disciples so that in him our peoples may have full life.

As Vincentians we must be listening to so many who, although confused and confused, long for the light and ask: "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water" (John 4: 15). These demands from us the responsibility of forming ourselves as suitable instruments to think, live and better spread the faith.

Since our foundation, we Vincentians have proposed to continue making Frederick Ozanam's dream come true: "To enclose the world in a network of charity", making the evangelical spirit of charity a reality in the world. This spirit of charity is linked to love, solidarity, attentive listening to the cry of the poor, it is linked to the fight against injustice and the defense of their rights. What we are called to do today is to renew the way of exercising the apostolate of charity through the search for new paths adapted to the realities and challenges posed by today's world. It is a long and never finished road, which requires a permanent process of reflection, analysis, dialogue and action, always faithful to the teachings of our founders and living, like Mary, solidarity with the poor in concrete actions.

The evolution of our apostolate is directly related to the process followed, both by those who commit to exercising charity, and by the recipients, the most abandoned, our masters and lords. The poor of today are not the same poor of yesterday. We must listen to them with great availability and attention to understand their needs, their

demands, their demands and respond to the complex situation of poverty, which despite the efforts of many, continues to increase day by day.

Frederick used to say: "I thank God for giving me birth in a world where there is so much to do". This is another challenge that we Vincentians face, **the second Vincentian challenge** is to accept that we were called by God to transform the world in which we live, that Jesus trusts us, and it is up to us to respond with fidelity and commit ourselves seriously to transform society and the situations of poverty here and now.

And the best way to transform it is going from assistance to promotion, self-promotion and the participation of those most in need through projects that fully involve them in their own self-realization. The current situation now requires us to take another step and commit ourselves to a process of social co-responsibility, because we consider it a privileged way to contribute to the realization of a truly peaceful world



that cannot exist as long as there are men and women who die of hunger, who cannot they have opportunities, they live sunk in despair. Being co-responsible, in fact, means being a conscious part of a community, participating in its life, and feeling called to fulfill our role, our mission. The community in which we live is the evangelical vineyard where the Lord calls us to work together with others so that our talents bear fruit for the benefit of all. This challenge is truly current for us Vincentians: it is a very strong appeal to our role and our responsibility, from the personal level to the social level.

Living co-responsibility on a personal level means that each of us must be willing and prepared to personally commit to take an active part in initiatives and strategies that aim to increase solidarity, rebuild social ties, and build peace. This means that each of us decides to renounce attitudes of indifference, apathy, lack of interest and that feeling of not being at ease the height of the situation, which is what makes us say "I don't know how to do it" in the face of each new proposal. It is only starting from oneself, and from the awareness that personal contribution is indispensable, that Vincentians can be formed and prepared to understand and live in their branches the co-responsibility to which we are called as Christians and Vincentians, convinced that the service to the poor cannot be effective if it is not accompanied by the commitment of all for the common good, justice and peace.

It is very important to learn to get out of our little environment, to open ourselves to the world, to have contacts, to confront ourselves. If we do not do it, we will work, yes, with the poor, but we will do nothing against poverty and its causes.

This is where we must evaluate **our way of volunteering and the effectiveness of our service.**

The need to evaluate our actions stems directly from our sense of co-responsibility towards the poor: they have the right to receive an effective service, we have the duty to perform it in the best possible way and to continually find out what responds more to their current needs.

Evaluation, especially qualitative evaluation, the one that examines the quality of our service, is essential for any volunteer project and action to advance and progress.

It refers to the meaning of what we do, our inner behavior, as we progress in our skills. It requires us to evaluate the result of our activity in the light of a value system.

It serves to evaluate if the objectives that we had set are still valid, if adjustments are needed to better respond to the situation. It invites us to ask ourselves what the consequences of our actions have been, if they have had positive effects and to what extent, if we have to continue to act in this way or if something should be changed. It also asks us to try to plan the most appropriate ways to achieve the goal and therefore define the strategies.

However, there is another very important aspect of the evaluation, related to our sense of co-responsibility with respect to the poor, and that is: **the evaluation of our personal relationship** with the most abandoned, with the families that are privileged by their apostolate of charity.

That kind of service does not require us to work for someone, but rather that we be with someone, that we travel a section of the road together. This attitude requires continuous work with themselves and a frequent investigation of our personal relationship with others, be they individuals or families, so that we can achieve liberating accompaniment, which allows them to grow, to have the freedom to express their own ideas and take the ideas. decisions about their own life starting from their own resources and proposing their own solutions.

The Vincentian must assume a **responsibility with the family** since he has an extraordinary energy due to the love that lives in it. It is important to value their role, to help families understand that they are an important resource to transform and evangelize the world. We must support and accompany them so that they can overcome the crises that the family is experiencing today.

The Vincentian must foster among the **poor a respectful**, kind and significant presence that elevates their dignity and promotes their human and Christian condition; Saint Vincent himself tells us that a characteristic of Vincentian service is in the human and spiritual quality of the relationship that is established between the volunteers and the people and families that we accompany. That is why it is so necessary to take great care of our attitude in relation to the poor and to train and prepare for it to be liberating. A relationship of this type must be learned through training, listening, evaluation, and

a deep understanding of the attitudes of our models; Jesus, Saint Vincent, Saint Louise, Frederick and Marie who are an inspiring force of our commitment to the poor.

To achieve all this, great determination and enthusiasm are needed, as well as strong hope, however, the most necessary thing is not to be afraid to stand up for the poor, to engage in pressure and denunciation actions. that are necessary, always remembering that Jesus also came to help us overcome our fears. If we are afraid, we cannot truly love.

Being Vincentians today means:

- Develop an anticipatory role: not just serving, but having the courage to innovate, to go further.
- Fulfill a prophetic mission: read the present in the light of the Word of God and work so that prophecy becomes history.
- Develop an active policy of hope in our time of selfishness
- Work for a utopia that is not a dream but a project. We know that utopia is far away, but we also know that we can take a step, albeit a very small one, every day to bring us closer to its realization.

PRACTICE

1. How is your personal relationship with the ones in need?

2. Choose an interesting challenge, explain how can you face it?

3. For you, what is a liberating companying?

4. Explain what does the phrase "I thank God for giving me birth in a world where there is so much to do" mean in your Vincentian life?

SECOND KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 12 SERVE IN HOPE

The theological virtues are three: Faith, Hope and Charity.

Hope: "A state of mind in which what we want is presented to us as possible". In other words, our feelings, emotions, and desires are involved. And there is no one who escapes that feeling, because when the human being loses all hope, even if he breathes, he stops living.

This sentiment cannot in any way be considered a wishful thinking, or a lazy idealist sentiment. In fact, there are those who can be confused about it and relate the believer with those who advocate a kind of contemplative and passive quietism, something that is not typical of a follower of Christ. Hope implies active waiting. Not a sit idle. Some say that when you ask God for a tree, he gives it to you in the form of a seed. What it does not teach only to sow and wait. When the farmer finishes his work of sowing, he does not sit down, but engages in other activities related to his profession.

The inventions that man enjoys are born from an ideal, from a dream. It is rightly said that hope is the dream of the awakened human being.

The Branches of the Vincentian Family are a clear example of the dream come true of Saint Vincent, Saint Louise de Marillac, Frederick Ozanam, Saint Catherine Labouré and many more of "enclosing the world in a network of Charity".

That is why a Vincentian must have his feet on the ground, but in his heart harbor the hope of a better world.

Hope is not pretending that problems do not exist, but way to find solutions, provided by everyday life. It is the confidence of knowing that these are not eternal, that wounds will heal, and difficulties will be overcome. It is having faith, it is a source of strength and absolute renewal of our interior, which will guide us from darkness to light.

Loss of hope is the cancer of our century. Recovering it must be a priority task for the Church and for all Christians. There can be no faith in God or love of neighbor without hope for a better tomorrow.

SERVING IN HOPE should be the motto of every Vincentian, this reminds us all that loving God means caring for our neighbor in poverty.

The vocation, for Vincentians, is to follow Christ by serving those in need and bearing witness to his compassionate and liberating love. The Vincentian Family demonstrates its commitment through person-to-person contact.

Membership in a branch is the result of a vocation. A vocation of personal contact with Christ in the poor. A contact that must be presided over by compassion and the will to free human beings from their suffering. A job for the establishment of the Kingdom. Personal contact with the sufferer is the most obvious distinction of the Vincentian apostolate. We want to unconditionally love the poor, and we try to imitate the way Jesus loved. "It is necessary to be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus (MT. 16, 25)" (CCC 2232).

"THE VICENTINE FAMILY SERVES IN HOPE"

Like the air we breathe, so is hope for the Christian spirit. We have real hope, that our work will improve both the lives of the poor we visit, our own lives and in a mysterious way, also humanity in general. If we go through difficulties, we remember that hope: "It brings us joy in the trial itself ..." (CCC 1820).

VINCENTIAN RULE

Every human being lives if he aspires and hopes. It is not enough for us just to exist; we must have goals in which intelligent hope is the engine that leads us to achieve them.

The virtue of Hope is what makes us serve with joy, opens new proposals, and invites us to fight to be better every day. Serving in hope is opening a way of improvement for the needy, it is the consolation for the oppressed, it is joy in sadness.

Communicating hope is saying to the other "You can succeed, there is no obstacle so great that you cannot overcome". If we serve in hope, we persevere and we make others persevere.

Hope is not a passive attitude, it makes us passionate, it drives us not to settle for what we are and to fight for what we want to be. Hope sustains us. Hope is the deepest nerve of the Christian, if we see the Old Testament, it is full of Hope in the fulfillment of a promise.

We must do good and do it well because mediocrity is the rottenness of faith. We must identify how much good there is in today's world and although evil wants to win over us, good ends up making its way.

Understanding hope to transmit it is our job, it is one of the theological virtues, which as such, reaches man by the Grace of God and we must feed it with prayer to keep it alive in all the acts of our life.

What will become of a life, of a job, of a project, of a hopeless service? In other words, every activity that we carry out has hope for something.

The Vincentian works with his neighbor, he understands service as that special opportunity that the Lord gives to practice love in solidarity, which awakens the situation he discovers in the one who suffers and who has decided to help.

It must arrive with your help accompanied by the Divine Message that encourages the spirit of those who receive it with the hope of a better future.

If each Vincentian manages to cover a greater number of needs, if each one assumes the commitment with dedication and dedication, if each Branch works as a team, if they manage to see their projects carried out with the families they share; you will be seeing hope fulfilled with the assurance and satisfaction that we have been the fulfilled hope of those who depend on us.

VINCENTIAN MEDITATION



Vincentians see the crucified daily on the streets of big cities and in the poor of the countryside. One of the great gifts of Saint Vincent was his ability to recognize the crucified Christ in the faces of the suffering and to mobilize the energies of others in his service. He was an extraordinary organizer. To help the most abandoned of his time, Vincent brought together rich and poor, women and men, clergy, and laity. Our meditation on the crucified Lord, who loves us even to death and on the crucified people in whom the Lord continues to live, will always be illuminated by the faith of the resurrection. The gospel proclaims loud and clear that long-suffering love triumphs, that God's power works through human weakness, that light overcomes darkness, and that there is hope even when hopelessness confronts us.

(Maloney, Temporadas en Espiritualidad)

THE GIFT OF HOPE

Story

Legend has it that there was once an Indian tribe camped on the side of a mountain; and the boss who was very ill. He called his three sons and said: "I am

going to die and one of you has to succeed me. I want you to climb the holy mountain and bring me a beautiful gift. The one who brings the best gift will be the new boss."

After a few days they returned. The first one brought a rare and extraordinarily beautiful flower. The second came with a colored stone, smooth and round, polished by rain and wind. The third said to his father: "I did not bring anything, at the top of the mountain I could see that on the other side there are wonderful meadows, full of green grass; I also saw a crystalline lake; I had a vision of where I could go our tribe to have a better quality of life. I was so overwhelmed by what I saw that I couldn't bring anything. "

And the old chief replied: "You will be the boss, because you have brought us the gift of the vision of a better future."

"In the heart of all winters lives a throbbing spring, and behind each night comes a smiling dawn."

Khalil Gibran.



PRACTICE

1. What does it mean to you “serve in hope”?

2. What will become of a life, of a job, of a project, of a hopeless service?

3. How are hope and faith related to the Vincentian Service?

4. In your Vincentian work, is your Branch hope for the ones need?

5. How is the story related to the Vincentian service?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 13 VINCENTIAN FAMILY'S STRUCTURE

The Vincentian Family comprises many groups of Christians who, following in the footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul, wish to continue the mission of Christ, proclaiming the Good News of God's love to the poor, through bodily and spiritual service. Some of them have given themselves to God in communities of priests, men and women religious, while others remain lay in the world.



VINCENTIAN FAMILY'S ORIGIN

Since 1617 the Vincentian Family has grown to include several hundred Catholic groups for women and men, lay and religious. This fact is an evident testimony of the strong impact that the life of an extraordinary man such as Saint Vincent de Paul has produced. He founded and established in the church three institutions at the service of **CHARITY and MISSION**: International Association of Charities, Congregation of the Mission and Company of the Daughters of Charity. In addition, followers inspired by the charism he left behind have created new ones, for the service and promotion of the impoverished brothers.

Today the Vincentian Family is called the set of institutions and followers of Jesus Christ, who were born and who participate in the charism welcomed, lived and bequeathed by Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac.



INTERNATIONAL VINCENTIAN FAMILY'S STRUCTURE

The Office of the Vincentian Family (VINFAM), as a function of the "Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family", coordinates activities, provides information and experiences of formation on the heritage and charism of Saint Vincent de Paul, to the Branches of the Vincentian Family (VINFAM) of the whole world. This includes promoting communication and collaboration among the different branches of the Vincentian Family, as well as opportunities for leadership to know and develop ways of working in communion on behalf of the poor.

Its current areas of work are the following:

- Creation and maintenance of the Vincentian Family database.
- Development of Councils of the international Vincentian Family.
- Biennial meetings of international and national leaders.
- Coordination of the International Vincentian Commissions.
- Provide resources through VINFAM: website, social networks and consulting services.
- Research for the advancement, promotion and support of tutorials.

The Vincentian Family seeks above all the coordination of efforts in collaboration for a systemic change. In addition, VINFAM's multilingual digital networks, supported by various commissions and programs, these being the following:

- Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family (ECVF) made up of various leaders of the Vincentian Family.
- Office for the Vincentian Family (OVF), a recent initiative to help the Family.
- Vincentian Family Advisory Committee (VFACO)
- Support of multilingual digital networks for the Vincentian Family (VINFAM)
- Commission for Systemic Change of the Vincentian Family (CSCVF)
- The Vincentian Family Initiative for Haiti (VFIH), a systemic change project. Managed by an independent non-profit structure.
- Commission for the Collaboration of the Vincentian Family (CCVF)
- Alliance in favor of the homeless (HOMELESS)
- Continental Councils
- National Councils
- Countries without Councils

INTERNATIONAL VICENTIAN FAMILY'S HIERARCHY STRUCTURE



VICENTIAN FAMILY'S STRUCTURE IN ECUADOR

ORIGIN

The Vincentian Family Ecuador (VINFAMEC) is a legal entity of private law, under the provisions of Title XXIX of the Civil Code book and according to the regulation of Non-profit Legal People. It was established in Pichincha, on October 21, 2006. The Headquarters is in the "Saint Louise de Marillac" Formation House. Exhibition Street E2-72 and Saint Vincent de Paul.

The Vincentian Family follows Jesus Christ Evangelizer of the poor, driven to share and incarnate the Vincentian Charism in its virtues: humility, simplicity, apostolic zeal, meekness, mortification.

It is a link between the Branches at the national level in unity with the Church. Inspired by the Magnificat Virgin Mary, they are called to share the dynamism of the Vincentian Charism, committed to serving the poor. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4: 3).

The main objective of the Vincentian Family in Ecuador is to: promote the unity and integration of the different Branches existing in the country, for a better service to the poor, respecting the identity and autonomy of each one of them. He hopes to achieve this goal through:

- Integrate the Vincentian Family of Ecuador by zones.
- Promote common projects of Vincentian Formation and of service to the poor, through self-management.

- Establish means of disseminating activities and communications among all the Vincentian branches of Ecuador.
- Promote the active participation of VINFAM in the Ecuadorian Council of Catholic Laity (ECCL).

The purposes it pursues are:

- Act with a sense of the Church, in unity and participation with its orientations, organizations and movements.
- To promote human, spiritual, pastoral life and the communal sharing of the branches of the Vincentian Family.
- Support each other in the exercise of leadership for the good of the members of the various branches and those in need.

STATUTES

The Statutes of the Vincentian Family of Ecuador were discussed and approved in the Extraordinary Assemblies of February 2007, July 2008 and November 2015.

Currently there are eight branches of the Vincentian Family in Ecuador, before which the need arose to join forces in the experience of evangelization, charity and justice, which allow obtaining answers to the realities and circumstances that arise. Reason for which a Coordinating Team was appointed, for whom the Statutes serve as a guide and tool in the exercise of their work.

VINFAM BRANCHES

- International Association of Charities (IAC)
- Congregation of the Mission (CM)
- Company of the Daughters of Charity (CDC)
- Miraculous Medal Association (MMA)
- Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVPS)
- Marian Vincentian Youth (MVY)
- Secular Vincentian Missionaries (SEVIMI)
- Vincentian Indigenous Missionaries (VIM)

VINCENTIAN FAMILY IN ECUADOR´S DIRECTIVE ORGANISMS

- a) National Assembly: It is the highest body of participation and government.
Composed by:
 - Coordinating Team

- Visitor of the Daughters of Charity and Visitor of the Congregation of the Mission.
 - President of each Branch of the Vincentian Family.
 - Two delegates for each Branch.
 - National Spiritual Advisors and Advisors and of each Branch.
- b) Coordinating Team: They are elected by secret ballot among those attending the National Assembly, for a period of three years, and may be re-elected for one more period. It is made up of:
- Coordinator
 - Vice-Coordinator
 - Secretary
 - Pro-Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Fiscal
 - Advisor- Spiritual Advisor, National.
- c) As affiliation to the International Vincentian Family.

VINCENTIAN FAMILY'S STRUCTURE IN ECUADOR



The functions of the Coordinating Team are as follows:

- Organize Assemblies, National Meetings that favor the unity, training and communication of VINFAMEC.
- Prepare and update the data bank of the Vincentian Family of Ecuador, postal and electronic addresses of the various branches, common projects, etc.
- Participate in meetings, encounters of the different branches of VINFAME with Vincentian Formation topics.
- Promote communication between the National Directives of each branch with the Ecuadorian Council of Laity Catholics.
- In the definitive absence of a member of the Coordinating Team, this body will have the power to appoint a substitute.
- Find and hire professionals to carry out specific activities of the VINFAM.
- Encourage experiences of work in common, such as mission and vocation ministry.
- Prepare an annual work plan.
- It will meet ordinarily every three months and extraordinarily when necessary.

PRACTICE

1. What is the Vincentian Family?

2. What are the principal work areas of the Vincentian Family Office as a function of the Executive Committee?

3. How was the Vincentian Family in Ecuador originated?

4. How is conformed the Vincentian Family in Ecuador?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 14 PRAYER: FOUNDATION OF EVERY VINCENTIAN

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL AND THE PRAYER



Saint Vincent is discreet about his own life and spiritual experience. But the reflections and slogans that he left regarding prayer, the life of prayer, bear his deep mark.

Two spiritual events decisively influenced him:

- his encounter with the poor, who make him read the Gospel with different eyes
- his meeting with Saint Francis de Sales, whose example he refers to as those of a father.

Saint Vincent is convinced that God hides his secrets from the wise and reveals them to the little and humble (Mt 11: 25), and "reveals to those hearts what all schools have failed to find" (IX, 385). One truth is the foundation of his life of prayer: "True religion is among the poor, and if we want to enter into the intimacy of God through prayer, there is no other way than to act before him, because 'we are poor and mean'" (XI, 440).

Prayer, as Saint Vincent understands it, is not just contemplation. It should not be disembodied, but rather lead to action. The great feelings, the beautiful elevations seem suspicious to him: there is a long way "from sweet conversations with God" to "work, to suffer, to misfortunes in the service of the poor" and from one to the other, it can "remain one half way" and "lacking courage". The illusion is so easy and pleasant, "let's not kid ourselves" (XI, 733).

Saint Vincent does not limit prayer to a personal relationship with God; he was concerned with the prayer of the church and helped to renew it. Upon verifying a liturgical anarchy, he tried, from the first retreats of ordinands, to remedy it future priests were taught to say Mass with dignity and uniformity.

He is not afraid to innovate, he organizes for the children at the end of the missions, a kind of para liturgy for catechesis, including a solemn procession and the first communion (Cf. III, 112).

Saint Vincent proposes a shared prayer. Although each one is alone before God and prayer is to be intimately united to Him, instead of isolating oneself in an individualism, it invites a spiritual exchange and invents the “repetition of prayer” in it each one communicates to the others, with simplicity, the thoughts you have had in prayer.

Today there is renewal of prayer; for those who are fully in action, see the need to examine themselves before God in recollection.

Schools of prayer arise and develop prayer groups. The places of prayer, monasteries, new or old sanctuaries, receive weekly and daily lay people who come to seek God for hours or days away from the madding crowd.

Prayer is shared, in prayer groups, particularly in youth groups, each one does not hesitate to say his prayer by simply making it known to his brothers gathered there.

New communities and new forms of prayer are born. The humble, to whom God continues to reveal himself, teach us to pray, we must hear them. Furthermore, mothers and grandmothers, in places where there has been persecution, the faith has been preserved and remains faithful through their humble gestures of simple prayer.

The simple people need to express themselves in their own way; if the liturgy does not appeal to them because it is too abstract, then they will leave the churches empty. Should we not, as Saint Vincent did, listen to the poor and humble in order to learn from them how to pray, but to pray with them and find with them an expression of their faith? We have no right, says Harvey Cox, to be the champions of justice for the poor and to spit on their devotions.

SAINT VINCENT, MAN OF PRAYER

Saint Vincent reveals himself as a man of prayer, in his lectures and in his correspondence. Any event is an occasion for praise, thanksgiving, intercession. He spontaneously addresses God and challenges him, thus showing that he remains in his presence, whatever his many occupations.

The letter addressed to Esteban Blatiron, superior of Genoa, ends, quite naturally, in prayer (one of many cases):

“Divine goodness unites the hearts of this small Company of the Mission in this way as well and ask what you want! Fatigue will be sweet, and all work will be easy, the strong will relieve the weak, and the weak will love the strong and obtain greater strength from God; and so, Lord, your work will be done to your liking and for the edification of the Church, and the workers will multiply, attracted by the smell of so much charity” (III, 234).

He ends with a spontaneous prayer, as many of the times, the conference of December 6, 1658 to the missionaries:

“Let us stand firm in the circle of our vocation; let us strive to have an interior life, to conceive great and holy ideals for the service of God; let us do good that is presented to us in the way we have said. I am not saying that you must go to infinity and embrace everything indifferently, but everything that God makes known to us that He asks of us. We are for him and not for us; if he increases our work, he will also increase our strength. Oh Savior! What a joy! Oh Savior! If there were several paradises, to whom would you give them but to a missionary who has stood with reverence in all the works that you have entrusted to him and who has not diminished the obligations of his state? This is what we expect, my brothers, and what we will ask of his Divine Majesty; and all of us, at this moment, will give him infinite thanks for having called us and chosen us for such holy and sanctified functions by our Lord himself, who was the first to practice them. Oh! How many graces we must hope, if we practice them with his same spirit, for the glory of his Father and for the salvation of souls! Amen” (XI, 398).

It is a spontaneous prayer, revealing a continuous practice of the presence of God. A prayer, which is maintained in daily fidelity to prayer and whose importance does not cease to remember:

“You and I must resolve not to stop praying every day. I say every day, my daughters; but, if it could be, I would say more: we will never stop praying, and do not let a minute of time pass without being in prayer, that is, without having our spirit elevated to God; because, properly speaking, prayer is, as we have said, an elevation of the spirit to God. But prayer prevents me from making this medicine and taking it, seeing that sick man or lady! It does not matter, my daughters! Your soul will never cease to be in the presence of God and will always be giving a sigh” (IX, 386).

San Vicente de Paul

Es preciso que tú y yo tomemos la resolución de no faltar nunca a la oración diaria. Digo: diaria, hijas mías, pero si pudiese, diría: no la dejemos nunca



“I will tell you (cause it is necessary for you to know) that, if you do not take advantage of the prayer, you will not get much fruit from the conferences; because my dear Sisters, how the gardeners take care twice a day to water the plants in their garden, which without this help would die during the great heat, on the contrary, thanks to the humidity, they get their food from the earth, because a certain humidity, born from this

irrigation, rises up the root, flows through the stem, gives life to the branches and leaves, and the flavor to the fruits; in the same way, my dear Sisters, we are like those poor gardens where dryness makes all plants die, when the care and industry of the gardeners does not take care of them.

For this reason, you have the holy use of prayer, which, like a sweet dew, moistens your soul every morning through the grace that comes from God upon you. And if you feel tired of your efforts and your fatigue, you have this healthy refreshment again in

the afternoon, which is giving vigor to all your actions. How much fruit will a Daughter of Charity produce in a short time, if she cares to refresh herself with this sacred dew! You will see how it grows day by day from virtue to virtue, like that gardener who sees his plants grow every day, and in a short time he will get up like the dawn that arises in the morning and grows until noon. In the same way, my Daughters, you will reach the sun of justice, which is the light of the world, to be immersed in it, just as the dawn is lost in the sun" (IX, 368-369).

"Well, let us all put a lot of interest in the practice of prayer, since all goods come from it. If we persevere in our vocation; it is thanks to prayer if we are successful in our tasks; it is thanks to prayer if we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer if we remain in charity, if we are saved; all this is thanks to God and to prayer. Just as God does not deny anything to prayer, neither does He grant us almost anything without prayer: '*Rogate Dominum messis*'; no, nothing, not even the extent of his gospel and what interests him most to his glory. '*Rogate Dominum messis*'. But, Lord, this concerns you and it is up to you. Does not matter! '*Rogate Dominum messis*'. So, let us humbly ask God to make us enter through this practice" (XI, 285-286)

A PRAYER FOR LIFE & FOR ACTION

One of the characteristics of Saint Vincent's prayer is that it always relates it to life and action. It is a true continuity, defined in the famous one: "Leave God for God". For this reason, Saint Vincent denounces prayer that only consists of "sweet conversations", and does not lead to resolution and action:

Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be at the cost of our arms, let it be with the sweat of our brow. For many times God's acts of love, complacency, benevolence, and other similar affections and interior practices of a loving heart, although very good and desirable, are nevertheless very suspicious. When the practice of effective love is not achieved: "My Father is glorified, says our Lord, that you bear much fruit". We must be very careful in this; because there are many who, worried about having an external aspect of composure and the interior full of great feelings of God, stop at this; and when it comes down to the facts and opportunities to act present themselves, they fall short. They are satisfied with their heated imagination, content with the sweet conversations they have with God in prayer; they speak almost like angels; but later, when it comes to working for God, to suffer, to mortify oneself, to instruct the poor, to go looking for the lost sheep, to wish that something is lacking, to accept diseases, or anything unpleasant, Oh! everything falls apart, and their spirits fail. Make no mistake: "*Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit*". And this is so true that the Apostle tells us that only our works are those that accompany us to the afterlife. So let's think about this; above all, considering that in this century there are many who seem virtuous, and who are indeed so, but who are inclined to a quiet and spring life, rather than to a strenuous and solid devotion. The Church is like a great harvest that requires workers, but workers who work. There is nothing so conforming to the Gospel as gathering, on the one hand, light and strength for the soul in prayer, reading and

retreat and, on the other hand, then going to make men partakers of this spiritual food. This is doing what our Lord and, after him his apostles did; it is to join the office of Martha with that of Mary; it is to imitate the pigeon, which half digests the food it eats, and then puts the rest in the beak of its young to feed them. This is what we are to do and the way we are to demonstrate to God with works that we love him (XI, 733-734).

For Saint Vincent, the best way to pray is to carefully prepare the day in the presence of God. For the example given to the Daughters of Charity, it is called "the method of the president":

"It is necessary that I tell you in this regard that I have received a great edification from a magistrate who made his retirement a year ago in our house. When he told me about the examination he had taken on his rules of life, he told me that, by the grace of God, he did not believe that he had missed twice in saying his prayer. But do you know, Father, how I do my prayer? I examine beforehand what I must do during the day, and from there all my resolutions derive. I will have to go to the palace; I will have such a cause to sue; I will perhaps meet some person of condition who, with his recommendations, will want to corrupt me; with the grace of God I will keep much of it. Perhaps I will be given a gift that I like very much, I will not take it. If I must dismiss someone, I will speak to them with meekness and cordiality. You can do your prayer in this way, which is the best; because it is not necessary to do it to have high thoughts, to have ecstasies and raptures, which are more harmful than useful, but only to make you perfect and truly good Daughters of Charity. Your resolutions, therefore, have to be in this way: 'I will go to serve the poor; I will try to do it in a simply joyful way to comfort and edify you; I will speak to them as to my lords. There are some who rarely speak to me; I will suffer it. I have the habit of saddening my sister on this or that occasion; I will refrain from it. She is teasing me sometimes on this thing; I will bear it. That lady flees me, that other one insults me; I will try not to leave my room and show the respect and honor to which I am obliged. When I am with that person, I almost always receive some damage to my perfection; as soon as possible I will avoid the occasion'. This is, I believe, my Daughters, how you have to say your prayers. Doesn't this method seem useful and easy?" (IX, 4647).

The union between prayer and life, Saint Vincent defines it in a significant way in many passages in which he raises the conflict between the urgency of service and the obligation of prayer, and even of the Mass: "My daughters, for the consolation of one who is in difficult tasks, I will tell you that no delay is allowed when it comes to serving the poor. If at the time of your prayer, in the morning, you have to go to take a medicine, go calmly; after an act of resignation with the holy will of God, offer your action, unite your intention to the prayer that is held in the house, or elsewhere, and leave without any concern.

If, when you return, your community allows you to do a little prayer or spiritual reading, great! But do not worry about it, nor believe that you have missed it, when you lose it; because it is not lost, when it is left for a legitimate reason. And if there is a legitimate

reason, my dear Daughters, it is the service of others. Leaving God for God is not leaving God, that is, leaving one work of God to do another or one of more obligation or of greater merit. You stop praying or reading, or you lose your silence to assist a poor person: well, know, my daughters, that doing this is serving God. What comfort for a Daughter of Charity to think: 'I am going to assist my poor sick people, but God will be more pleased in this than in the prayer that he had to do now'! And go joyfully where God calls you" (IX, 297-298).

A SHARED PRAYER

In the time of Saint Vincent, a form of prayer had a unique tendency to withdraw from life and away from action. Vincent reacts vigorously against individualistic prayer, which does not end with simple and spontaneous participation, and which is an indispensable experience for a true community.

Vincent confesses that he has been, with his communities, the creator of the repetition of prayer, thus leading to one of the most personal and private forms of prayer, the richness and joy of participation:

"And how were the practices introduced in the Community? The same: little by little, and without knowing how. The conferences, for example, of which perhaps this is the last one that I have with you, we did not think about them. And the repetition of prayer, which was something never heard before in the Church of God, and which has later been introduced into various observing communities, in which it is now practiced with much fruit, how did we come up with it? I do not know. How did we come up with the idea for all the other exercises and occupations in the community? I do not know it either" (XI, 328).

"My brothers, today we will not do the repetition, but we will deal with another very useful topic for the society; we will leave for another occasion the repetition of the prayer, which is a means, as everyone knows, of the most necessary that we have to inflame each other in devotion. We have reasons to thank God for having given this grace to the company, since we can say that this practice has never been used in any other community, other than ours" (XI, 575).

Numerous information is preserved from those repetitions of prayer to which Saint Vincent recognizes the stamp of simplicity and spontaneity, which inspired and encouraged the participants, even going so far as to confess that many times these spiritual participations have helped and enriched him personally a lot: "I am persuaded that science is useless, and that a theologian, however wise, does not find any help in his science to pray. God communicates more ordinarily to the simple and ignorant of good will than to the wisest; we have many examples of it. Devotion and spiritual lights and affections are more commonly communicated to truly devoted women than to men, unless they are simple and humble. Among us, the brothers sometimes give a better account of their prayer and have more beautiful ideas than we, the priests. Why,

my daughters? It is that God has promised it and is pleased to entertain himself with the little ones. Console yourselves, then, those of you who cannot read, and think that this cannot prevent you from loving God, nor from doing prayer well. If someone had such difficulty in praying that they were completely unable, they could ask permission to pray the rosary. And according to the advice given to him, he will use this beautiful devotion. Our blessed Father said that, if he had not had the obligation of his office, he would not have said more prayer than the rosary. He highly recommended it, and he himself prayed for thirty years without ever missing to achieve from God the purity for which he granted his holy mother, and for the good of dying" (IX, 212-213).

"My daughters, in hearts that lack the science of the world and that seek God in himself, it is where he is pleased to distribute the most excellent lights and the most important graces. He discovers those hearts what all the schools have failed to find and reveals mysteries that the wisest cannot perceive. My dear Sisters, don't you think you have experienced it yourself? I think, I have already told you, and I will repeat it once more: we repeat the prayer in our house, not every day, but sometimes every two or three, when Providence allows us. Well, by the grace of God, the Priests do it well, also the clergy according to what God grants them; but our poor brothers, oh! in them the promise that God has made to manifest himself to the little ones and the humble is fulfilled, since many times we are amazed at the lights that God gives them; and it is evident that everything is of God, since they do not have any knowledge. Sometimes he is a poor shoemaker, other times a baker, a cartman, and yet he fills us with admiration. Sometimes we talk to each other about this, with great confusion for not being as we see them to be. We say to each other: 'Look at that poor brother; have you not observed the beautiful thoughts that God has given him? Is not it admirable? Because what he says, he does not say because he has learned it, or has known it before; He knows it after having prayed. What great and incomprehensible goodness of God in putting his delights in communicating to the simple and the ignorant, to make known to us that all the science in the world is nothing but ignorance compared to what he gives to those who strive in seek him on the path of holy prayer'"! (IX, 385-386).

"At home we have something else that helps us a lot to support ourselves, is the repetition of the morning prayer. I assure you that I cannot explain to you the good that this does. It is not to believe that God keeps us dry during prayer. I am sure that I will always be able to learn from a good brother some of the good ideas that he has had, and that in this way I will be able to take advantage of them. I hope so from the goodness of God, and it never fails me. If you only knew how much joy I feel listening to those good brothers and to our sisters! When I hear one of our sisters saying certain things, I am so impressed that I cannot explain it to you. I do not know if others are like me; but I am like that, and they impress me a lot when they say something edifying in their repetition that benefits others and themselves" (X, 794).

"I cannot pass on, in silence, something that moved me this morning, during the repetition of the prayer. One of our brothers who had hidden something and had not been able to discover it from his confessor, has had the grace to say it aloud, also

stating that he was a poor and mean young man, educated in the schools with the alms of his parish, which he had never stated before, even though he had thought to say it on several occasions. When I heard that young man declare his interior with such energy, I have to confess that I felt the affection he had for him grow in me, and that I believe that God will give him the grace to be a great saint; yes, my sisters, for many times it takes nothing less than an act of heroic virtue for that, to give a soul the strength to do another million virtuous acts. I have told you this to confirm that it is a good sign for a soul to say its faults" (IX, 708).

Lord Jesus, you who wanted to make yourself poor,
make us have eyes and hearts for the poor, and
that we recognize you in them, in their thirst, in
their hunger, in their loneliness, in their
misfortune.

Arouse in our Vincentian Family unity,
simplicity, and humility
and the fire of charity that burned
Saint Vincent de Paul

Give us strength so that, faithful to the
practice of these virtues,
we can contemplate and serve you
in the poor people
and one day join you and them in your Kingdom.

PRACTICE

1. Saint Vincent, man of prayer: Do I pray as before? Why? In my life, what place does prayer occupy? For what reasons do I pray?

2. A prayer in life and for action: How can my prayer feed my life? Does my prayer lead to action? How?

3. A shared prayer: How do I pray: in community, in group, in family, in team? What time do we pray together? How do we pray and share it?

THIRD KEYSTONE VINCENTIAN FORMATION

TOPIC 15 RELEVANT PRAYERS AND QUOTES OF THE FOUNDERS

The famous quotes, phrases or sentences are words that collect lessons-learnings that convey reasons for reflection for a better life.

They gain prestige and last beyond the author, the context and the reason why its author proposed it, they become generalized in the following generations. They belong to decisive people of the historical evolution, versed in various genres of knowledge.

The introduction of a speech, exhibition, conference or other aspect of oral communication, nuanced with a suitable phrase for the occasion and the topic, is an excellent friend to "break the ice"; and, it can close with a flourish any public participation, serving as an element of testimonial reflection.

Today we use these phrases for almost everything, for the following reasons:

1. They motivate and are a **source of inspiration** for those who internalize them and put them into practice.
2. **Summarize** many of the things we preach and do. We identify with them. They serve us for retreats, workshops, courses, presentations, etc.
3. They stay in the memory, unlike a plain text, they stay in our mind. They are **striking, visual and powerful**.
4. They **feed the thought, they give the magic touch**, to do things differently, as the author saw it, and practice it today.
5. They serve as a **starting point**, they are a source of inspiration, motivation and analysis of our values and emotions; like the spark that lights the wick.
6. They are **emotional**, they allude to our feelings, they make us smile, anger, cheer us up, and they lead us to react, move and act.

Some phrases from our Founders and Saints speak for themselves. They are a legacy and inheritance; a call to compromise; an invitation to action. They remind us:

1. The centrality of Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor.
2. Loving Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ, serving them "bodily and spiritually".
3. Serve the poor with practical and concrete charity.
4. Live and serve in a style of simplicity and humility.
5. Serve the poor in personal contact.
6. That the poor are our "masters and teachers".
7. Bring an affective, effective, creative, and contagious love.

8. That the poor evangelize us.
9. That the Vincentian charism is a missionary charism.
10. That Vincentian spirituality is deeply Marian.

We share phrases and thoughts from:

- Saint Vincent de Paul,
- Saint Louise de Marillac,
- Saint Catherine Labouré,
- Blessed Frederick Ozanam

They, instruments of God, are for us examples of witness and goodness. "A little kindness never hurts, and a lot, even less". From what we know about them and their works, we praise God in the life and work of our Vincentian Saints. Their biographies and writings tell us that they are truly admirable.

Enjoy and meditate with these reflections!

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL'S PHRASES

THE MISSION

"Let us try to fill ourselves with the spirit of fervor; (...) let us have compassion for so many souls that perish and let us not let our laziness and insensitivity be the cause of their downfall" (SVP XII, 321; ES, 601-602).



"It belongs only to God to choose those whom He wants to call, and we are sure that a missionary given by his paternal hand will do more by himself than many others who do not have a pure vocation. It is up to us to ask you to send good workers to your harvest and live so well that with our examples we offer more incentive than displeasure to work with us" (SVP VIII, 287; ES, VIII-285).

"When science, the spirit of government and good judgment meet in the same subject, then, my God! What a treasure"! (ES, XI-361).

"Who deserves the most? The one who loves God and neglects the love of neighbor or the one who loves the neighbor for the love of God? Which of those two loves do you think is the purest and most disinterested"? (SVP XII, 261-262; ES, XI, 552-553).

"Love is inventive to infinity".

"Charity is above all the rules and it is necessary that all of you take it into account.

Charity is a great lady; you must do everything she order. Therefore, in that case, leave God for God. God calls you to pray and at the same time calls you to attend to that poor sick person. That is called leaving God for God" (SVP, IX 1125).

"Perfection does not consist in the multitude of things done, but in the fact of being well done".

"Jeanne, you will soon realize how heavy it is to carry Charity. Much more than carrying a jug of soup and a full basket (...) But, you will keep your sweetness and your smile. It is not all about distributing the soup and bread. The rich can do that. You are the insignificant servant of the poor, the Daughter of Charity, always smiling and in a good mood. They are your masters, terribly touchy and demanding masters, you will see. Therefore, the more disgusting they are and the dirtier they are, the more unjust and ruder they are, the more you must give them your love! (...) Only for your love, for your love alone, will the poor forgive you the bread that you give them".

"Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of anything" (SVP XI, 83; ES, XI, 778).

"Prayer is a preaching that we do to ourselves" (SVP IX, 84; ES, IX, 779).

THE MOST SUBLIME PRAYER

There is the most sublime prayer: contemplation. Quiet the soul in the presence of God, receive what God gives, because hardly if the soul does anything, but the Lord inspires him more than how much he could search.

My daughters, have you not savored this prayer when, surprised, without merit on your part, God himself fills your soul and prints such lights that you had never noticed?

My daughters, in the souls without human science and who seek God in themselves, it is where God sows his lights and most tasty graces (...) What neither the wise nor the universities attain, God grants to the simple of heart. The priests of the Mission pray well, also the clergy, but it is the coadjutor brothers who receive more light from God's visit.

"Noise is not good; good does not make noise".

"Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be at the cost of our arms, let it be with the sweat of our brow. For many times, the acts of God's love, of complacency, of benevolence, and other similar affections and interior practices of a loving heart, although very good and desirable, are nevertheless very suspicious, when the practice of effective love is not reached".

"The wise and humble are the treasure of the society, as are the good and pious doctors of the Church".

On my God! How beautiful it would be to see the poor, considering them in God! "The poor are my weight and my pain".

"How happy will be those who can repeat at the time of death those words of our Lord Jesus Christ: I have been sent to evangelize the poor" (XI, 725).

"They are our masters and lords, and we are their unworthy servants" (S.V.P. XI / 3, p.273).

"Our little company is entirely due to the poor; they are the Lord's favorites".

SAINT VINCENT PHRASES: THE POOR

"God loves the poor, and therefore loves the ones who love the poor".

"Being a Christian and seeing our brother or sister suffering, without crying with him or her, without being sick with him or her! That is a lack of charity; it is to be a caricature of a Christian; its inhuman; is to be worse than animals".

SAINT VINCENT TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Dear Daughters of Charity,

I, Vincent de Paul, am going to tell you how I see you in the people of God. The Daughters of Charity (...) They will have the house of the sick as a monastery, they will have holy obedience as a cloister, they will have a rented room for a cell, they will have the neighborhood parish as a chapel, they will wear no veil other than holy modesty and they will have the fear of God for bars (SVP IX / 2.p.1179).

SAINT VINCENT PHRASES: THE VIRTUES

"Be careful with yourself, do not go to undo with your conduct, what you built with your preaching".

SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC'S PHRASES

"For obedience to be as God asks of us, it is necessary that we obey with great simplicity and humility".

"This heart of mine is too narrow to house you, but I want to enlarge it by faith and love".

SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF SAINT LOUISE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Above all, living together in a great union and cordiality, loving one another; take great care of the service of the poor. My dear Sisters, I continue to ask God for His blessing and I ask Him to grant you the grace to persevere in your vocation so that you can serve Him in the way He asks of you. Take great care of the service of the poor and above all living together in a great union and cordiality, loving one another, to imitate the union and the life of Our Lord. Ask the Blessed Virgin a lot to be your only Mother. Oh cross, oh sufferings! how lovable you are, since the love of God has given you the place, in his Son, to acquire through you the power to grant his paradise to those who the delights had thrown from him! (Saint Louise de Marillac 764).



"Content that God sees what I want to be for Him; For this, He wishes to give me to Him, allowing this disposition to operate in me" (L.M.E.23).

"Blessed are those who strongly use their love to make their Master the absolute owner of their hearts".

"For obedience to be as God asks of us, it is necessary that we obey with great simplicity and humility".

"May my first thought, after the rest of the night be for God".

"Let us remember, sisters, that the manger is the throne of the kingdom of holy poverty".

"Take good care of the poor. Be well united among yourselves and pray insistently to the Blessed Virgin".

SAINT CATHERINE LABOURÉ'S PHRASES

"The Virgin lowered her eyes and looked at me". "If we observe the little things well, we will do the big ones well".

"I went to bed with the thought that that very night I would see my good Mother. I had wanted to see her for a long time".

"Why would he be afraid to go to see the Lord, his Mother and Saint Vincent"?



"I have only been an instrument. It was not for me who the Blessed Virgin has appeared. If she has chosen me, who did not know anything, it is so that she cannot be doubted".

"Have a medal struck, according to this model". "People who wear it with confidence will receive abundant thanks" (Words of the Virgin to Saint Catherine).

BLESSED FREDERICK OZAMAN'S PHRASES

PRECURSOR OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

In front of the poor, we should prostrate ourselves at their feet and say to them with the apostle: "You are our teachers, and we will be your servants; you are for us the sacred images of God that we do not see, and not knowing how to love him in any other way, we love him in you".



Frederick confesses to his mother: "I, lawyer, can you imagine that? Lawyer is not a big deal". He cared about being a good Christian. "Today it is necessary great virtues and strong men".

"God and education have given me a certain tact, ideas, a certain margin of tolerance, which they want me to do as a kind of head of the country's Catholic youth; my chair, five or six articles in the newspapers ask me, but I realize my weakness, because I am only twenty-one years old".

"The earth is getting cold and we Catholics have to give the vital warmth that does not exist. We are the ones who have to start over just like the martyrs".

"It is necessary to embrace the world in a network of charity".

"Happy are those who can dedicate their lives to the investigation of truth, good and beauty and who are never disturbed by the vulgar thought of pecuniary uselessness".

"How much more are actions worth than words!".

"We are useless servants who come together to serve God, but we are not allowed to be idle servants".

"God gave me the grace to be born in faith, he placed me on the knees of a Christian father and a holy mother, he gave me as my first governess a pious sister like the angels with whom he has gone to meet".

"Humility in the works; not to make as seen, but to let us be seen".

"If you start with humility you can do great things, like Jesus Christ who, from the humiliation of the manger, rose to the glory of Tabor".



PRACTICE

1. Name 3 phrases that have called your attention, and explain your reasons

2. Which phrase lives in your Vincentian self?

3. In your Vincentian life, what virtues have our Vincentians Saints and Blessed tried to imitate according to the phrases mentioned?

4. Which of the phrases mentioned are you going to practice in your Vincentian life to serve those in need?
