

## SEPTEMBER 27 MSGR. SAMUEL BIANCO

“Must undergo,” “be raised”—these phrases resonate within the extraordinary experience shared by John the Baptist, Elijah, all the ancient prophets, and Jesus. Each of them was called by God, experiencing His powerful presence in their lives to such an extent that everything they did poured forth from a passion for God and a commitment to the people He cared about, especially those who were broken or poor, on the periphery, left aside and abandoned.

St. Vincent de Paul, along with Frédéric Ozanam and Sister Rosalie Rendu, are modern founders of the present-day Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the prophetic spirit they embodied continues to thrive and grow. Ozanam articulated the qualities required to be a Vincentian—and indeed anyone who helps those in need—with the first being a deep commitment to service. This means giving the best of what you have to people in need, which is manifestly illustrated in the life of Jesus.

In His public life, people poured out to touch Jesus and be with Him, and He, in turn, reached out to serve them. Everyone has a favorite story about Jesus serving those who were broken, needy, and poor. My favorite is the account of Jesus walking near Jericho and hearing, in the distance, a blind man calling out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy, have pity on me.” Jesus responded by healing and touching the blind man. The blind man on the road represents not only the blind but every poor person in the world. If we look honestly at ourselves, we realize that we, too, in various ways, are both those who serve and those who need to be served by God.

The second gift that the Vincentians bring to their work is something Jesus counted on: community. He was not only the Lord, the Messiah, and the leader; He called people into friendship and communion. He didn’t only want people who lacked initiative, intelligence, or ability.

Thus, He called Vincent de Paul, Ozanam, and Rosalie Rendu to join Him as companions and fellow workers in the field.

The Vincentians follow a simple rule: they go out two by two. This approach serves two purposes: first, to support one another and second, to engage in personal visits aimed at forming friendships and communion with those in need. This relationship is vital, as it allows us to receive something from those we help. Regardless of wealth or poverty, everyone possesses gifts, and it is through the sharing of our mutual gifts that the reality of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is formed.

The third and most powerful gift that Vincentians—and anyone working with the poor—needs is the gift of simplicity. When I mention simplicity, I don't mean simple-mindedness or lack of intelligence. Simplicity refers to being like a child, returning to the basics and focusing on what is necessary and important. A simple approach allows us to cut to the heart of the matter: identifying the issue, the person, the need, and determining how to respond. We should not get lost in arguments, confrontations, or disputes. If someone is in need—be it a glass of water, food, home services, or more complex psychological support—we should focus on what is truly important and essential.

“How do I, how do we help this person in this particular need, at this specific moment, in this home or housing development?” By keeping it simple and focused, we avoid getting tied up in extraneous matters that distract us from our mission.

What weaves simplicity, service, and friendship together, the "corona" or jewel, is the spirituality that was inherent in Jesus and the prophets. Organizations that engage in service, friendship, and simplicity share much in common with us, but the gift we bring is the power and passion inspired by God. Jesus was filled with God and His fire—first, a warmth that brought gentleness to His heart. It is also a fire of purification that

clears away hypocrisy and clutter created by self-service, allowing us to be with the poor. While our egos may linger, we must ask for mercy and forgiveness for any ways our sinfulness may have impeded our service. This forgiveness originates not only from others but is first granted by Jesus.

With Jesus present, the Holy Spirit brings light to all situations. Today, we face extraordinarily complex social, political, and economic problems. While we are becoming increasingly knowledgeable, understanding more about poverty than ever before should not discourage us. Instead, it should illuminate the effective steps we can take in the past and inspire us for future efforts. We need intelligence to organize and amplify our efforts, focusing more on supportive housing and perhaps a guaranteed annual wage. These are the kinds of initiatives that arise from the light of our intelligence and are integral to our Vincentian mission.

So, I leave you with these words: we want more people to be Vincentians. We hope that not only will they undergo the necessary training but that they will also be inspired at the deepest level to serve the poor. And so, I leave you with these words:

We want people to be Vincentians. We hope not only that they will undergo the training, but also that they will be raised up and inspired at the deepest level to serve the poor.

When they get tired, when they get worn out, they will return to Jesus, who is the source of life, and say, “Lord, help me keep going. Don’t let me, and don’t let others stop.”

As you are prophets and servants of the poor, we have come to serve one another and our brothers and sisters. Please join us.