



Vincentian Spirituality

Some Reflections by Way of a Response

Our spirituality underpins our approach to God, to how we live and how we die. This is true of all spiritualities, Ignatian Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Dominican Spirituality, Vincentian Spirituality and so on.

In this paper we are considering Vincentian Spirituality and we ask the questions: What is Vincentian Spirituality? What are the core values of Vincentian Spirituality? How are the signs of the times influencing this spirituality?

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, felt called by God to live their lives in total dedication to the Father in the Spirit as revealed in Jesus Christ, Who emptied Himself to become human. For them, Christianity was a love story between God and humanity by reaching out in total and respectful involvement and friendship in the lives of the least, the lost and the last, materially and/or spirituality. Vincent looked on the people who were poor as 'his lords and masters'. The social conditions of their times shaped their response as contemplatives of charity and as mystics.

Many disciples were attracted to their spirituality and joined the Fathers and the Daughters. Later Frederic Ozanam and a small group of students founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a lay association, who decided to answer the call of Christ by bringing bread and friendship to the people who were poor.

In the nineteenth century, Margaret Aylward, set up the North City Branch of The Ladies of Charity, an association founded by St. Vincent de Paul in Paris. Trusting in God's Providence, and guided by Fr. Gowan, C.M., she set up St. Brigid's Orphanage and schools for children of poor families because she believed that all share the dignity of children of an all loving and provident God. To give permanence and stability to the orphanage and schools she founded the Sisters of the Holy Faith. In the teaching of St. Vincent de Paul on charity she found the perfect articulation of how to integrate prayer and meditation with service to the families who were poor and the essential balance between the organisation of good works and trust in providence.

Today's signs of the times guide us on how we respond to Social Justice by the Christian virtues and Vincentian characteristics of love, friendship and prayer.

We suggest these are the signs of the times:

- A more universal awareness of the extent of poverty and marginalisation in our world.**
- Growing gap between rich and poor.**

- **Awareness that the situation need not be so.**
- **A call to action by a broader spectrum of people to tackle this situation**
- **Globalisation.**
- **The sacredness of creation and the dignity of all creatures; care of the earth.**

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