



September 2020 – AIC Training

Texts of the videos produced for the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

## Charity

**Rose de Lima Ramanankavana, AIC International President**

**Happy and holy feast to all!**

It is with joy that I come to you, to share in this video some reflections on CHARITY:

One of St Vincent's fundamental virtues is Charity.

St Vincent lived his whole life in Charity: and it was so important to him that he named his first foundation, so our own AIC, the "Confraternity of Ladies of Charity".

As AIC volunteers today, we have committed ourselves by hearing the "cries" of the poor around us, and we owe it to ourselves to live with faith and enthusiasm this Charity that St Vincent preached all his life by word and by example.

As children of God, the faith we received at our baptism means we are already devoted to living the charity of Christ:

We are sent not only to love God, but to make him love us. Our vocation is therefore to go and spread the divine fire throughout the world, to set the hearts of men on fire as the Son of God did, He who came to bring fire into the world and set it ablaze with his love.

How can we give CHARITY to others if we do not have it within us and among ourselves?

### **What St Vincent tells us: CHARITY AND SERVICE**

For St. Vincent de Paul, charity, God, Jesus Christ, the poor and poverty are **five realities** that are linked and they clarify one another.

Disassociating them prevents us from discovering the meaning and the nature of charity, as St Vincent understood it.

Here are some famous quotes from Saint Vincent: "*A heart truly on fire and animated with this virtue makes its ardor felt; and everything in a charitable man breathes and preaches charity.*" (SVP XI, 59, p.66)

*"Let us love God, brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows."* (SVP XI, 25, p.32)

In Jesus, charity and compassion become **action**: St Vincent said that we must move from **affective love**, in other words, from feelings of compassion, mercy and tenderness, to **effective love**, which is about practical, real and effective actions for the benefit of others. They are actions of service, of detachment from ourselves, of disinvestment in order to give and give ourselves to those who need it.

### **HOW can we LIVE THIS CHARITY today?**

Love and charity among the members of a group, community or association are necessary conditions to offer better service to the poor. In this way, we bear witness in the name of God and the Church.

The best way to practice charity towards the poor is to avoid giving alms, and instead allow them to live without receiving them, thus enabling them to live in dignity.

These three attitudes seem to me to be essential to help the poor regain their dignity and self-confidence:

- 1) *Going towards them, listening, working out together how to address their urgent needs.*
- 2) *Doing what they tell us to do: everyone has their own talent and it is up to us to seek ways together to exploit this talent, we have to believe in them, in their potential.*
- 3) *The Spirit makes the person: God dwells in every person and in his or her heart; it is Christ that we see in the face of the Poor.*

In this way, we believe that change will be possible, especially in this time of pandemic, when we must organise ourselves so that the “poor do not suffer from lack of organization”.

In conclusion, let us make this prayer of St Vincent our own:

*“Grant them and grant me, even though I am a miserable sinner, the grace to be able to accomplish all my actions out of charity, humility and simplicity in helping my neighbour. Grant us this grace, our Lord. If we are faithful in the practice of these virtues, we hope that you will grant us the reward that you have promised to all those who serve you in the person of the poor” (IX, 538-539).*