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

## **Simplicity** **Sr. Eloisa Trujillo, DC**

### **Simplicity in Vincentian Spirituality**

I have been invited to share some reflections on SIMPLICITY in Vincentian spirituality.

Let us listen to Saint Vincent as he speaks to us and says: *Simplicity... I call it my gospel* (CCD:IX:476). *Simplicity... is the virtue that makes us Godlike and also makes us available for everyone.*

Saint Vincent had a great esteem for this virtue to the extent that he defined it as *his gospel*, admitting that, despite his origins and Gascon character, he had also made *much progress* in the practice of this virtue.

If humility is viewed as the foundation of Vincentian spirituality, then simplicity is proposed as the main characteristic of the life and thought of this saint.

#### **1. Simplicity is the style and way of being Vincentian**

Two lines of reflection emerge in the thought of Saint Vincent: his faith and his observations concerning the lives of the poor.

God is simple. From Scripture Vincent received the fundamental message that God is simple; he reveals himself and communicates with simple people (cf. Matthew 11:25).

The invitation to address God directly is like a refrain: *To tend to simplicity is to go to God and It is among these poor people that true religion and a living faith are preserved. They believe simply...* (CCD:XI:190).

If the poor are the path that leads to God, then we must approach them with simplicity since they represent God.

#### **2. In the teaching of the missionaries, the perspective with regard to simplicity is pastoral**

Through the practice of simplicity, missionaries are able to touch the hearts of the poor who might be uneducated and who can only be won over to the gospel by simple words and gestures.

- Therefore as laymen and laywomen who are missionaries we must know how to adopt humble and prudent attitudes... we must also know how to use simple, appropriate and understanding language when reaching out to those men and women who are poor and to those who are the beneficiaries of our charitable activity.

In summary, we are dealing with a matter of being mindful of the situation of the people with whom we are interacting and thus treating each person in the most appropriate and effective manner.

### **3. Simplicity is a “spirit”, a “lifestyle”**

Tenderness attracts people and goodness welcomes people.

This spirit of simplicity comes from God and is revealed in the way in which peasant women, the first Daughters of Charity, lived their lives and thus expressed that simple spirit: do not be afraid to speak the truth, especially in unjust situations and when the truth involves the cause of those who are poor:

- Do everything for God regardless of what the world might think;
- Avoid duplicity;
- Maintain a calm and serene composure, even when hurting internally.

The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity echo these words:

*To depend on the Holy Spirit is to allow oneself to be molded into a resemblance to Christ, gentle and humble of heart... it is God's will that the Daughters of Charity devote themselves particularly to the practice of humility, simplicity and charity... Simplicity leads them [the Daughters of Charity] directly to God and helps them to seek and love the truth and to defend it in situations of injustice, to be transparent, authentic, and consistent in their words and in the way they live (Constitutions, #18).*

The practice of this virtue is very relevant today: it touches the very depths of a person and determines authentic interaction with others.

### **4. Some realities invite us to question our simplicity as Vincentians**

To be simple implies:

- To be faithful to ourselves: this means that we accept ourselves as we are, that we are indifferent to the judgements that we receive; furthermore it means that we live in the truth and that we are bold because those who are simple have nothing to lose.
- To be sincere with others: this means that we attempt to facilitate exchanges and sharing; it also means that we know how to overcome rigidity and formalism while at the same time promoting relationships and creating an environment of trust.
- In light of the realities of today's society we attempt to put aside desires to have more, and our desires for power... instead we seek to respond with more evangelical attitudes.

How can we ensure that our Vincentian identity and vocation are clothed with simplicity?

### **5. We conclude by asking the Lord for this virtue that is so fundamental to our Vincentian spirit**

Lord, give us your simplicity so that our lives are welcoming, modest, generous and transparent, so that your light can shine through us. Yes, Lord, clothe us in your simplicity so that our lives might flourish with love and goodness. Amen.