



YOU'VE HEARD HIS CALL TO HELP OTHERS.
... IS IT TIME TO ANSWER? ...

Invitation Reflection #1

In John 1:40-42 Andrew, fresh from hearing Jesus, excitedly sought out his brother Simon. When he found Simon, Andrew couldn't wait to invite him to go hear Jesus himself.

And the world changed.

We all know that as a result of the personal invitation by Andrew, that Jesus said to Simon, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church." What if Andrew had said, "I'm tired. I think I'll take a nap and catch up with Simon later. But the enthusiasm he had from hearing Jesus created a sense of urgency and he couldn't wait to find Simon. The Catholic Church and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are here today because of that personal invitation. Good thing he didn't take a nap. Plus, Peter could have said no. But one can surmise that because of Andrew's enthusiasm, Simon Peter went.

Steve Rupp was invited by Zip Rzeppa to join the Society of St. Vincent de Paul twelve years ago. Zip was very excited for Steve. Unfortunately, Steve didn't see it at first. He was a corporate America guy and working for the Church didn't seem a good career move or financial fit. But, after much prayer, he said yes. And his world changed. Steve said that being surrounded by Vincentians everyday, exposed him to people dedicating themselves to growing closer to Christ through their service to the poor. Steve likes to quote his Dad saying, "You are who you hang out with." Hanging with faith-filled Vincentians changed Steve's life.

In these two stories a person on fire for Christ, shared that enthusiasm and it changed lives. As Vincentians, we have an opportunity to share our faith. We have an opportunity to bring people into the Society and let God change their lives. What an incredible blessing—both for the new person and for the Vincentian.

But we can't take a nap. We must develop a culture of excitement and urgency. God has put the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in our lives to share it. Our WHY Statement says we must, "Seek and serve all in need."

Andrew sought out Simon, Zip sought out Steve. Who will you seek out? Whose world can you change?



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Invitation Reflection #2

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Mt 22:36-40)

Christ’s message in Matthew gets to the core of the Christian life. The commandments are also the source of our Vincentian vocation, as our Three Pillars flow from this call to love. The Manual states “the primary purpose of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to increase the holiness of its members” (2.5). Our First Pillar—our first commandment—of Spiritual Growth calls us to love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind.

Our Third pillar of Service charges us, in the words of our WHY statement, “to seek and serve all in need.” This seeking and serving is an expression of loving our neighbors as ourselves. If we are grounded in the First Commandment and the First Pillar, we can better see Christ in our Neighbors: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”

Where is our Second Pillar of Friendship? It is interwoven throughout these Great Commandments! The key is understanding we are talking about persons. Persons are made for friendship and connection. As human persons, we love and are loved by not a spiritual abstraction but the Three Persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, in seeing the Face of Christ in our fellow Vincentians and Neighbors, we connect with them as friends.

What else are we called to as Vincentians? We know Catholics in our midst who have felt the call to love and serve God but are looking for a connection between the call and its lived experience. As Vincentians, we can share the great gift we have been given by inviting new friends into our conferences. New friends provide opportunities for new expressions of the Great Commandments.

How do we best connect with those who are Vincentians in spirit but are not yet members of our conference?



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Invitation Reflection #3

Jesus said to his disciples: *“To you who hear, I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you...Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you...because the standard you use will be the standard used for you.”* (Luke 6:27-38)

That’s the truth of the Gospel – bald, uncompromising Godly truth. It’s also really hard to do. How does anyone live like that? How do we learn to do those things?

One of our Vincentians who knew he was dying from a terminal illness, spoke about this particular passage. He’s passionately in love with the Society and when asked why, here was his reply: “For much of my life, I’ve believed in this Gospel and tried to live it but it was really difficult. Part of the challenge for me was that I was caught up in my job, my family, and my social life, and in the pressures of the moment I struggled to keep this message in the forefront of my mind. Then I’d lie in bed at night and reflect on my day and kick myself for all the times I screwed up. The other challenge was I didn’t have anyone who was equally passionate about this Gospel and would challenge me. Then I was invited to join the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and that all changed. Suddenly I was given opportunities daily to live this Gospel – and challenged by the faith and spirit of other Vincentians to get better and better at it.”

So many Catholics want a “silver bullet” to help them live the Gospel in real daily life – and that isn’t easy to find. The Society provides a structure of Spiritual Growth that keeps the challenge of Gospel living in front of us, and the Friendship that supports our efforts. By inviting others to join the Society, we are giving our friends and fellow Catholics a very concrete way to satisfy that longing – that “pull” – and they will be forever grateful.

Question: What would I tell someone else about how my time as a Vincentian has made me a better Catholic and a better imitation of Christ?



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Invitation Reflection #4

(The Mission of the Seventy-two Luke 10: 1-9, 17-23) After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two] others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.

He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way.

Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.'

The seventy[-two] returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name."

Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power 'to tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

At that very moment he rejoiced [in] the holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Turning to the disciples in private he said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."

Reflection

As Vincentians, we have heard and answered the call to discipleship, and have been sent out in pairs –even sometimes “like lambs among wolves”.

What experiences have I had as a Vincentian where I could clearly discern the Holy Spirit at work – where “miracles” occurred or where His power to overcome the enemy was evident?

Do we, like the seventy-two in the Gospel, return filled with exuberance – rejoicing, because we have had the privilege of experiencing Christ at work in the lives of our neighbors – and because we have been able to play a part in that work?

Can the people around us recognize our rejoicing – and the reason for it? Do we share it? Do we invite others to participate in it?