

Spiritual Reflection - January

In our action and result oriented culture, it is easy for us Vincentians to think sometimes that the few hours of Society sponsored work in a week or a month constitutes all that is required of our commitment to the work of charity. After completing a few home visits or delivering some furnishings or food to the “poor” families requesting help, we can feel good about having done some good to some actual people and can relax in the usual comfort of our normal habits. That, from our greater society perspective, is totally fine. After all, everybody has his own responsibilities and limitations in time and resources. Vincentians are probably doing more than most citizens already in extending help to the poor and in remedying social injustices. However, most of us Vincentians are not satisfied with just feeling good at having contributed “our share”. We are inspired by the spirit of St Vincent, who relentlessly gave of himself to the poor in every opportunity, any time and all the time. How can that be sustained really, we wonder, and how can we follow such an example in our present busy environment of mass media, material abundance and overwhelming life choices and distractions? I believe that the answer goes beyond our natural and humanitarian sympathy and depends on the kind of relationship we have with Jesus. With this relationship and prayer, we can appreciate our own poverty, empathize with the poverty of the poor and begin to see Jesus in all people including the poor. Like St Vincent and Mother Teresa of the recent past, we can also experience not only real joy in giving but the joy returned from the poor in manifold.

We do not actually have to look hard or far to see Jesus in the poor. Quoting Mother Teresa “There are the hungry not so much for bread but for respect and understanding; the naked not so much for a piece of cloth but for human dignity and recognition; the homeless not so much for a shelter but for the human touch in their empty loneliness”. As Vincentians, we really do have the opportunity to practice what St Vincent did in his days if we have a similar kind of relationship with Jesus and develop the same attitude. We shall find them in our family, our neighbors, our work place, our community and even in our parishes. If we are not aware of their poverty, we are reminded that we really should be more sensitive as charity does begin at home. If we turn our back on them, we are turning our back to Christ himself. Therefore, what we do as part of our Society sponsored activities is really just a small part of our 24 hour day living the spirit of St Vincent.

If we want to be successful and satisfied as Vincentians, the question to ask is what kind of relationship we have with Jesus? Are we seeing him in the poor of all kinds – physical and spiritual? And do we experience the joy in giving to the poor?

*Joseph Tsui, member of the national spirituality committee
Western Regional Council*