

A Lenten proposal

During my term as Spiritual Advisor for BC/Yukon, and subsequent attendance, participation, and presentations at the Regional and National AGA's and Retreats, I have become very aware that we Vincentians are showing signs of aging, with all the problems that accompany old age. Our so-called “Golden Years” frequently surprise and challenge us with ill health, and decline in physical mobility and mental stamina. We are very conscious of our human frailty and that of our spouse. We don't need to seek new ways of disciplining the body during Lent, the body is bent on disciplining and humbling us!

Here's a simple, even fun way, of measuring our spiritual progress this Lent. Prepare a visual aid of the 12 “tools” you need for your Lenten Tool Kit. Mine is framed in a 5”x7” picture and will be on display where I will see it at least 3 times every day – on the dining room table!

Take one of the 12 tools and work with it for 3 or 4 days using all 12 by the end of Lent as you apply them to your everyday life.

In the words of Pope Francis to the Roman Curia, “It is necessary to renew ourselves spiritually, humanly, and professionally” (as Vincentians).

I promise you a “Happy Easter” as a reward!

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Vincentian Tool Kit

Golden Thread: This small piece of golden thread is for our friends, the poor. This golden thread ties us together to our Vincentian family. We need to feel close to our brothers and sisters as we bind ourselves to our friends.

Hershey' Kiss: Reminds you that everyone needs a treat. The chocolate will give you energy as you travel and will remind you of your Vincentian brothers and sisters who are on the journey. When you feel let down you will not only feel their arms around you but also their tender kisses.

Elastic Band: This tool will remind you that each one of us has to stretch a little more. When God moves in your life it is not an easy road and is often a road less travelled. We are called to stretch, and when we are hurt, to bounce back. God is with us; we will not be stretched too far and will not snap.

Lifesaver Candy: We all need saving once in a while. This candy reminds us of the Omega, the ultimate lifesaver and constant companion, Jesus. We need to take him to our meetings, to our friends. We must use our lifesaver regularly.

Mint: This is for the times when you have a bad taste in your mouth. When wrong decisions are made or when you feel it is all too much. Your work as a Vincentian is so valuable. You are worth a mint to your human family, your Vincentian family and your heavenly family. Yes, this mint is important.

Button: Think of times when we must “button” our lips and say a silent prayer. The button is to remind us that our tongue can sometimes lash out and hurt someone. It also reminds us that as good Vincentians we must be prepared to listen carefully. Give our friends the time to tell their story. It reminds us to “button up” at meetings when our words may hurt or be critical.

Eraser: Of course, the first thing you think of when you see this is that you and others will make mistakes and so do our friends, the poor. We all make mistakes and we all need forgiveness. When other make mistakes, it is necessary to think of the button especially when hurtful remarks are at the tip of your tongue. Forgive others as our Lord forgives us. Use your eraser to fix when you can and forgive when you cannot.

Tissues: Yes, there will be tears. Use this tissue to dry your tears; the tears of your friends and the tears of each other. This tissue will also clear your eyes so that you may see the tears in others. You must see clearly when you work for God.

Coin: This copper coin reminds us that our help for the poor is not always financial. Our friends need us as much as our money. We should not be caught up in money. The coin reminds us that we should start our year in a begging position. Our funds are shared with all those in the Society working with the poor.

Toothpick: A reminder of the pain we cause others when we pick at them. It also reminds us to pick the good qualities in each other and in ourselves and to let those good qualities shine.

Band-Aid: This has a two-fold meaning. First we use the band-aid to heal the hurts and the wounds caused by others or by us. Second, we use this band-aid to remind us that we can only use “band-aid” solutions for so long. Our ultimate goal as Vincentians is to look for and put in place long-term solutions. Warning, this band-aid should never be used as a cover up.

Cross: This cross reminds us of our Saviour and His challenge to us; to serve the poor. We are reminded to “feed His sheep” and “look after His lambs”. We must pray for us in our hearts. We bring Christ with us to the poor, to our meetings and to each other. Let the face of Christ shine brightly in you so that others may see. Look for Christ’s face in all those we serve. We must be people of prayer and never forget that the work we do is not ours. It belongs to God, and if we trust and pray, it will be good. It will be very good.