

Spiritual Reflection - September 2020

“If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

How do we respond as Vincentians when the charity we provide is misused or squandered? It seems shocking to us at times, but it is a reality and indeed there are many people who do not join groups like ours out of fear that this may happen. They do not want to have their good nature taken advantage of. They don't want to put themselves in a situation where out of their good Christian intentions they become the “sucker”.

One of the members of my home conference went through his Vincentian formation in Atlanta, Georgia. As a portion of his formation, he and a group of other prospective Vincentians met with a Sister of Charity (another member of the Vincentian Family) as she had spent many years in devoted service to the poor. At one point, one of the prospective Vincentians asked her, “What if you get ripped off?” As I recall from the story (almost certainly with inaccuracy), she replied as follows:

“I am glad you asked that question. I will make three comments. First of all, nobody ripped you off. It isn't about you. Whatever that person took wasn't yours – it was donated and belonged to the poor. Second, you still did a good thing. God sees what you did, God sees your discouragement at the abuse of your efforts, and God sees you carry on in loving faithful service of the poor He so loves. Thirdly, if you don't get “ripped off” every now and then, you may not be doing it right.”

It never was between you and the person who “ripped you off”. It was between you and God. *“And the King will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least of these least brothers of mine, you did for Me.’ ” (Matthew 25:40)*

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