

Reflection Paper *The First Rule (1617)*

Fifth Theme: Vincent's practical recommendations with regard to the administration of the Confraternities

N.B. This reflection invites us to engage in a process of internalization.

We propose using the method of *Lectio Divina*

1. Read this reflection
2. Meditate (what is this reflection saying to me; repeat the phrase that you find most significant)
3. Prayer (what is this reflection inviting me to say to God; what have I heard God saying to me: to thank God, to ask some favor from God, to praise God)
4. Commitment (following the example of Vincent de Paul, what specific commitment will I make).

❖ **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, Savior of the world, during your earthly life you practiced charity and helped others in an incomparable manner. Guide and inspire our practice of this virtue so that we might contribute to the realization of God's plan. Thus as we imitate Jesus may we give glory to God while at the same time encouraging others to serve you and to serve our brothers and sisters most in need. Amen.



Braakhuis (Praying #7)

❖ **Fifth Theme: Vincent's practical recommendations with regard to the administration of the Confraternities**

○ Reflection:

In the December 8th 1617 Rule, Vincent wanted to be very clear about all those matters that were important with regard to **the administration of temporal goods and rendering of accounts** ... today, we refer to that as **"fundraising"**. Vincent insisted on complete transparency in financial matters.

In this regard, let us reflect on the words of Vincent that reaffirm what has just been stated above:

“The Pastor, the Prioress, the two Assistants, and the Procurator will be responsible for all the temporal goods of the confraternity, movable as well as immovable. Consequently, they will have the authority to give orders in its name to the Procurator to do whatever is necessary for the preservation and collection of these goods. The Treasurer will keep the money, documents, and furnishings, as has been stated, and give an annual report...”

“After his accounts have been reviewed, the Procurator will report to the same gathering the state of the temporal affairs of the confraternity and what he has administered and negotiated during the year so that the Lord, Syndic, Administrator, and Council members of the town may be adequately informed by the report of the management of the temporal welfare of the confraternity. If they find it faulty, they may have recourse to our most honored Prelate the Archbishop to have it put in order...”

“The Prioress will keep a book of expenditures, in which she will record the responsibilities of the Treasurer for the documents, money, and furnishings of the confraternity. In the event that neither she nor anyone else is willing to take on this responsibility, except for the furnishings and part of the money that will be needed for a few months for the food of those who are poor, the confraternity will instruct the Procurator to take charge of the rest and to give an account of it...”

“The collection box in the church, placed there for the upkeep of the confraternity and the relief of those who are poor, will be opened every two months in the presence of the Pastor, the Prioress, the Treasurer, the Procurator, and the Assistant. The Treasurer will be given whatever is in it” (CCD:XIIIb:15-17).

It is obvious, then, that our Founder was aware of the many different situations that might arise and as a result formulated the Rule that we continue to follow at the present time.

Another important aspect that Vincent referred to was the procedure to be followed in the event that one or more of those persons in a position of leadership were to become negligent. He stated: *“The Prioress, Treasurer, and Assistant may be removed from office before the end of their term by the confraternity, if, in its judgment, they do not carry out their duty well” (CCD:XIIIb:17).*

Vincent recommended that we be “contemplative in action” thus imitating his own lifestyle. In the Rule that has been the subject of our reflection we read: *“Those who know how to read will read unhurriedly and attentively a chapter of the book by the Bishop of Geneva, entitled Introduction to the Devout Life. Before the reading, they will raise their minds to God and will implore His great mercy in order to derive the fruit of His love from this devotional practice” (CCD:XIIIb:19).*

When concluding the first Rule, it was clear that Vincent wanted our groups to be true fraternal communities and so he wrote: *“They will take care in practicing humility, simplicity, and charity, each deferring to her companion and to others, performing all their actions for the charitable intention of persons who are poor and with no human respect” (CCD:XIIIb:19).*

- Words of Saint Vincent:

“The Church is compared to a great harvest that requires workers, but hardworking ones.”

Vincent de Paul (CCD:XI:33)