



September 2020 – AIC Training

Texts of the videos produced for the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

Charity

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Good Morning.

We are concluding the Triduum in preparation for the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul. Today we are going to reflect on charity.

We have seen that simplicity and humility are virtues that Jesus practiced. These virtues are absolutely necessary in order to live a life of charity and in order to engage in service on behalf of others. That is even more true when speaking about engaging in service with a gospel spirit and reaching out to men and women who are living in poverty.

Jesus gave us the commandment of love: *“love one another as I have loved you”* (John 13:34). Jesus manifested that very love and he asks us to manifest our love concretely, through action, dedication and service. The greatest expression of Jesus’s charity towards us occurred at the time when he offered up his life on the cross.

In Jesus, charity and compassion become action. We see a very clear example of this in the parable of the Good Samaritan: *“he was moved with compassion and poured oil and wine over his wounds”* (Luke 10:33-34). Therefore, it is through acts of self-giving and detachment that we reveal the meaning of Christian charity, which goes beyond justice, because charity supposes justice.

For Saint Vincent de Paul, charity, God, Jesus Christ, the poor and poverty are five interrelated realities. To separate them would prevent us from discovering the meaning and content of charity, as Saint Vincent understood it: *“Let us love God, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows”* (CCD:XI:32).

With those words, Vincent is telling us that we must move from affective love, that is, from the feeling of compassion, mercy and tenderness, to effective love, that is, to concrete, specific and effective actions on behalf of others.

Christian charity is to see beyond ourselves, and to do this with the gaze of Jesus. In other words, we are being challenged to see the needs of those living in poverty. Thus, as we become aware of that reality, we are impelled to act.

The best way to practice charity towards those living in poverty is to avoid having to give them alms, but instead, empowering them to live without the need to receive alms, in other words, empowering them so that they can live dignified lives.

Love and charity among members of a group, community, or association are the necessary conditions for better service on behalf of men and women living in poverty. Such is the testimony that we give in the name of God and of the Church.

Vincent concluded one of his conferences with the following prayer that we want to make our prayer: *“O Savior of our souls, Light of the World, please enlighten our understanding so that we may know the truth of what we have just heard, you who have formed for yourself a Company of poor women who serve you in the manner you have taught them. Make them your instruments, my God, and give them and me, wretched sinner that I am, the grace to carry out all our actions through charity, humility, and simplicity in the assistance of the neighbor. Grant us this grace, Lord. If we are faithful in the practice of these virtues, we hope to have the reward you promise to those who serve you in the person of the poor”* (CCD:IX:460-470).

Thank you and have a joyful celebration on the feast of Saint Vincent.