

Vision: Seeing Christ in the Faces of Those We Serve



**“Being Vincent De Paul:
A Primer”**

**Ladies of Charity USA
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
AUGUST 25-28, 2022**

*Vincent's ability to see Jesus in those who are poor provided the foundation of his charism and ministry. In this presentation, we will consider some of the elements that contributed to that vision: a deep belief in the Incarnation of **Christ**, a willingness to be **converted**, a desire to be **collaborative**, and an ability to be **creative**. Mixed together, these elements pointed the way forward for the Patron of Universal Charity. They also signal the direction for a Lady of Charity.*

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Possible Topics

- **“A Conspiracy of Women”**
- **“5 Statements That Reveal the Heart of VdP”**
- **“Vincent and the Bible: Beatitudes, Final Judgment, and Vincentian Mottos.”**
- **And other possibilities.**

“Being Vincent de Paul: A Primer”

- Belief in the Incarnation of Christ
- Willingness to be Converted
- Desire to be Collaborative
- Ability to be Creative

I. A deep belief in the
Incarnation of Christ

Mottos of Vincentian Groups

Focus on Christ

- *“He has sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor”* (Lk 4:18-19). **CM**
- *“The Charity of Jesus crucified urges us”* (2 Cor 5:14). **DC**
- *“To serve rather than be served”* (Mt 20:28). **AIC**

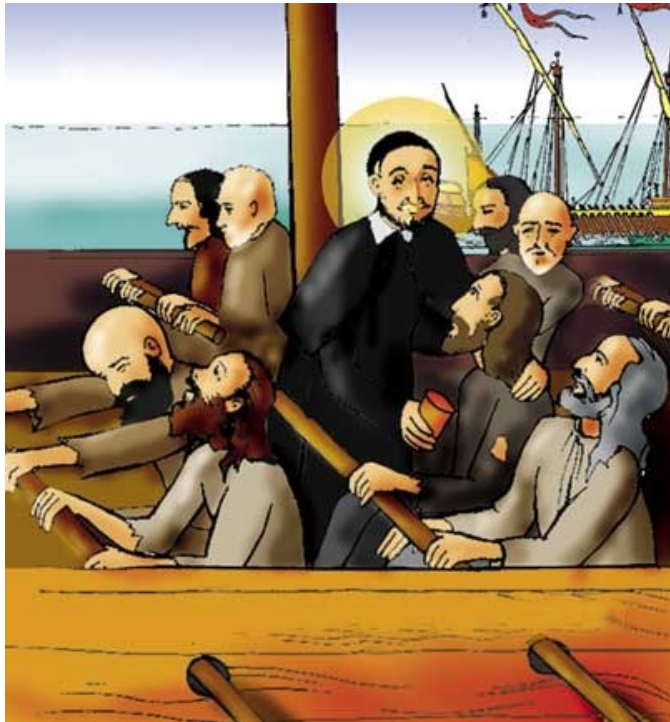
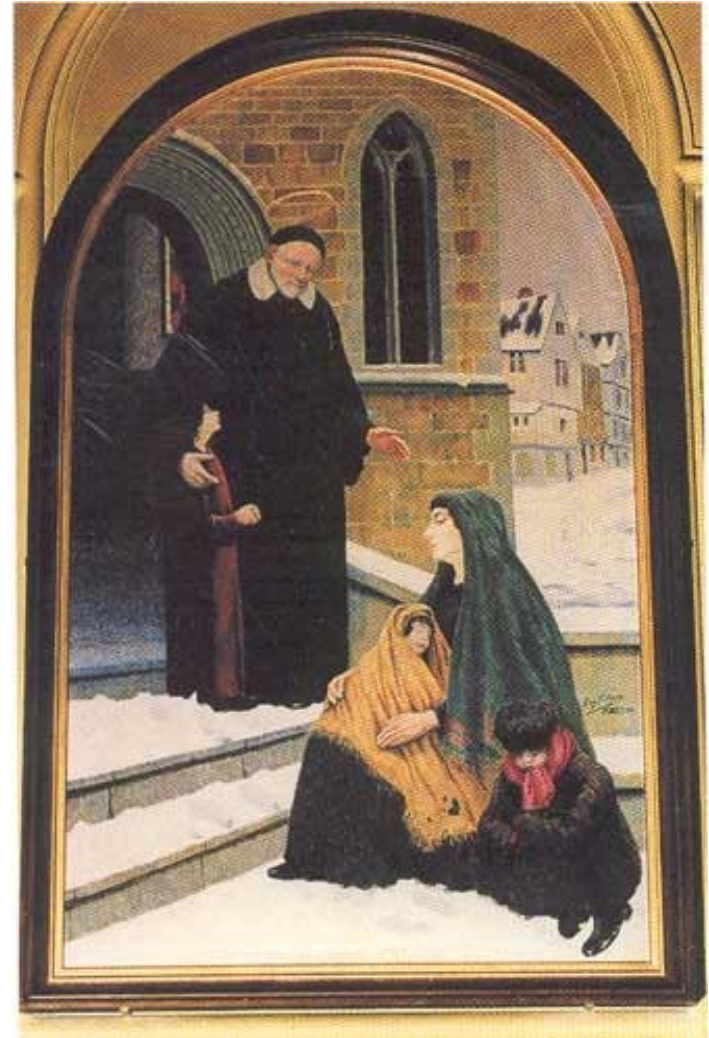
Louis Abelly , *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God, I:103*

[Vincent] had taken Jesus Christ, our divine savior, as the only exemplar of his life. He had so imprinted the image of Jesus Christ upon his mind and was so penetrated with his holy maxims that he spoke, thought, and acted only in view of God. The life of our divine Savior and the lessons of the Gospel were the sole rule of his life and actions.

They were his book of morals and his book of politics, and they guided him in all the matters that passed through his hands. They were, in a word, the sure foundation on which he built his entire spiritual edifice. We can say in truth that without realizing it, he left us a miniature portrait of his whole life and a sort of motto, when he said one day: “Nothing pleases me except in Jesus Christ.”

That [principle] was the source of his unshakable constancy and firmness in doing good and of his being able to stand unmoved by any consideration of human respect or his own personal interest. This source enabled him to support the contradictions, to endure the persecutions, to put his life on the line and, as the wise man says, to defend to the death justice and truth.





*“I must not judge a poor peasant man or woman by their appearance or their apparent intelligence, especially since very often they scarcely have the expression or the mind of rational persons, so crude and vulgar they are. But **turn the medal**, and you will see by the light of faith that **the Son of God, who willed to be poor, is represented to us by these poor people. . . .** He describes himself as the Evangelizer of the poor: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*” (CCD 11 #19, p. 26)*

In serving persons who are poor, we serve Jesus Christ. How true, Sisters! You are serving Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And that is as true as that we are here. A Sister will go ten times a day to visit the sick, and ten times a day she'll find God there. As Saint Augustine says, what we see with our eyes is not so certain because our senses sometimes deceive us, but the truths of God never deceive. Go to visit a chain gang, you'll find God there. Look after those little children, you'll find God there. How delightful, Sisters! You go into poor homes, but you find God there. Again, Sisters, how delightful! He accepts the services you do for those sick persons and, as you have said, considers them as done to himself (CCD:IX:199).

“An invisible person is the magnetic pole which orients Vincent’s profound thoughts, his preferences, his way of speaking. His talks are full of aphorisms and quotations, but he never uses them as absolute principles or constraints on his thought. They are brush strokes and embellishments to invoke a Life.”

“Even the evangelical maxims are nothing other than condensations of the life of Christ. They have no intrinsic power of their own, they are only expressions of the power of Jesus, who expresses himself through them and in them. ‘Our Lord—not evangelical quotations—is the rule of the Mission.’ (XII, 130)” (Dodin, p. 55)

From the humble character
of his birth
to his ignominious death,
Christ was among the poor,
and, in fact, was the poor.



2. Vincent de Paul: Converted by Life

a. Vincent in Clichy (1612)

VdP served in the parish of Clichy near Paris. 600 peasants

I used to say to myself, , 'Mon Dieu! how happy you are to have such good people!' I said to [the Cardinal], 'Your Eminence, I can't tell you how happy I am.' 'Why?' he asked. 'Because I have such good people, so obedient to all that I tell them that it seems to me that neither the Holy Father nor you, Eminence, are as happy as I am.' (CCD:IX:507-508)



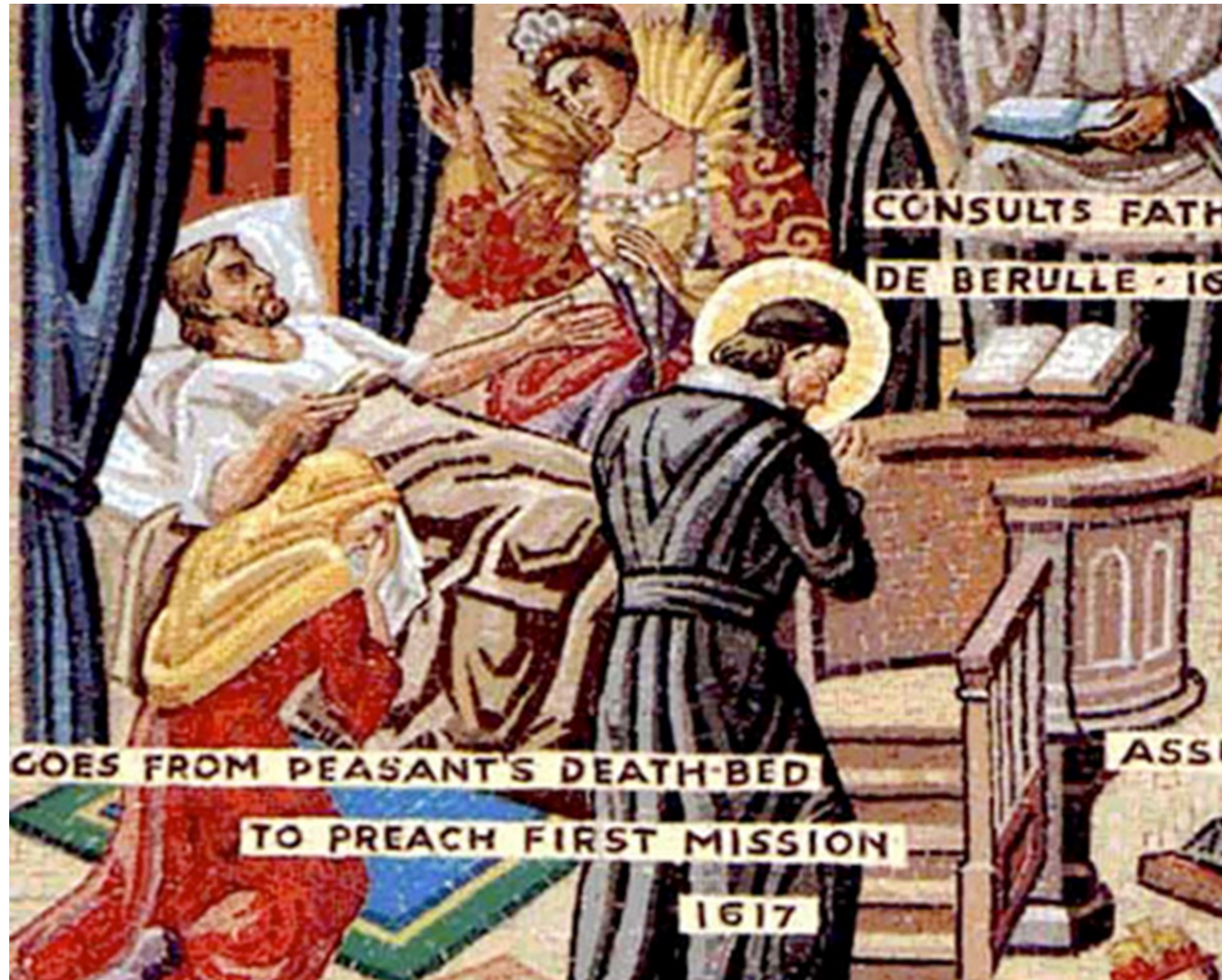
b. Three Stories in 1617

i) Gannes

ii) Folleville

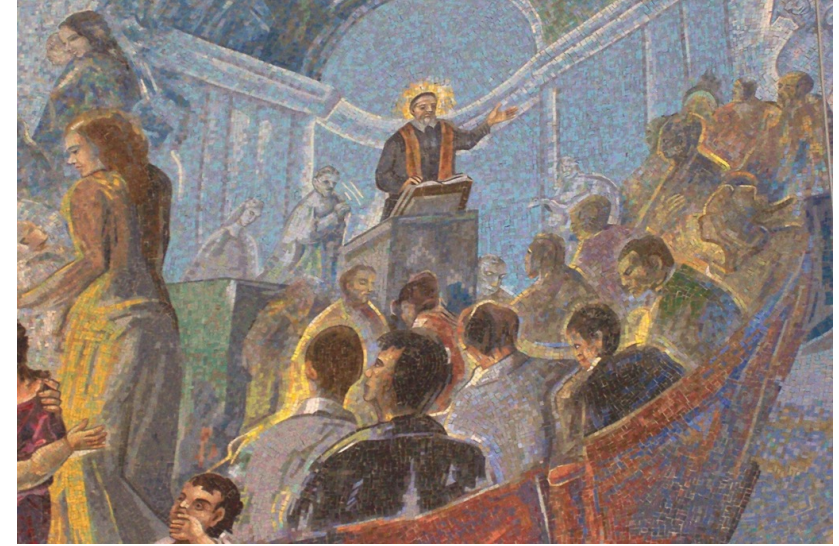
iii) Chatillon

i. The Peasant at Gannes (1617)



ii. The Preaching at Folleville (1617)

“In the month of January 1617, on the twenty-fifth, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, that lady [Madame de Gondi] asked me to preach a sermon in the church of Folleville to urge the people to make a general confession, which I did, pointing out to them its importance and usefulness. Then I taught them how to make it properly.” (CCD 11 #2, pp. 3-4)





iii. The Parish of Chatillon

Every Lady of Charity will be able to point to the experience in the Parish of Chatillon as contributing to the conversion of Vincent. It gave rise to the Vincentian principle that:

“The Poor suffer more from lack of organization than lack of charity.” (CCD XIIIb, pp. 8-9, 1617)

“On Sunday in Chatillon, as I was vesting for Holy Mass, word was brought to me that in an isolated house a quarter of a league away everyone was ill, not one being on his feet to help the others, and that all were in indescribable need. I had only to mention this in the sermon when God touched the hearts of those who heard me and they found themselves deeply moved with compassion for these poor afflicted ones.” (VdP)

Converted by the Events in Châtillon

1. Firstly, Vincent de Paul felt himself challenged on this occasion as never before by a social condition, by physical human misery for which he was personally called upon to find a solution.
 - This “Rule for the Confraternity of Châtillon” contains the two adverbs that will henceforth characterize Vincentian service, particularly health care: **"corporally and spiritually."**

Converted by the Events in Châtillon

2. The second important outcome of the incident at Chatillon is Vincent de Paul's newfound consciousness of the role of the laity, particularly lay women, in the ministry of the church.
- Vincent became convinced of the necessity, for both evangelization and service of the poor, of a **concerted effort among the Christian people, priest and laity, men and women.**

- Vincent was converted by life.
- At Folleville, he had become aware of the full extent of the **spiritual** abandonment of the rural poor due to a lack of good priests to assist them. At Chatillon, their **physical** care dominated.





3. A desire to be Collaborative

- Madame de Gondi
- Marguerite Naseau
- Françoise Bachet

a) Madame de Gondi and the Congregation of the Mission

“Ah. Monsieur! What's this?”... “What have we just heard? No doubt it's the same for most of these poor people. If this man who is considered an upright man was in a state of damnation, what will it be like for others who live more badly? Ah. M. Vincent! How many souls are being lost! How can this be remedied?” (CCD:XI:3).





**What must
Be done?**

Vincent preached soon after on January 25, 1617 (the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul). He later referred to that day as "the first mission" and he attributed its success to the encouragement and resources of Madame de Gondy:

God had such regard for the confidence and good faith of that lady (Madame de Gondy)—for the large number and enormity of my sins would have hindered the success of this act—that he blessed what I said; and those good folk were so moved by God that they all came to make their general confession.” (CCD 11 #2, pp. 3-4)



b) Françoise Bachet and the Ladies of Charity

In August of 1617, Vincent became parish priest of Châtillon-les-Dombes. After his first sermon there, Françoise Bachet and her friend resolved to devote their time to good works! Françoise soon discovered a family so ill that none could care for the others, and she reported their needs to Vincent as he was vesting for Sunday Mass.





S^TVINCENT DE PAUL FORME A CHATILLON SA 1^{RE} SOCIETE DES DAMES DE CHARITE ET LEUR REMET SON REGLEMENT. 8 X 167

Vincent described these women:

*“ wishing from God the mercy of being His true daughters, [they] have decided among themselves to assist spiritually and corporally the people of their town who have sometimes suffered a great deal, **more through a lack of organized assistance than from lack of charitable persons.** . . . The confraternity will be called Confraternity of Charity.”* (VdP, CCD XIIIb, pp. 8-9; Conf. 126; “Charity of Women [Chatillon-les – Dombes],” Nov-Dec 1617)



c) Marguerite Naseau and the Daughters of Charity



“[She] was the first Sister who had the Happiness of pointing out the road to our other Sisters, both in the education of young girls and in nursing the sick, although she had no other master or mistress but God.” (VdP)

And so collaboration led to a deeper vision
and to the foundation of the essential arms of
the Vincentian charism: AIC, CM and DC



4. An ability to be Creative

“You should also recall how she tended to conform all her actions to those of Our Lord. She did what Saint Paul said, ‘It is no longer I who live, but Jesus who lives in me.’ In this way she strove to make herself like her Master by imitating His virtues. And that’s what we saw in this good soul, who patterned herself on the virtues of Our Lord.”



**“Vincent and Louise:
One and the same
passion, the poor”**

Elisabeth Charpy, DC

Vincentian Creativity

- a) The Company of the Daughters of Charity of the Sick Poor
- b) Ministry to Victims of War and Refugees
- c) A Christian Education

a) The Company of the Daughters of Charity of the Sick Poor

*“On the Feast of Pentecost, during Holy Mass or while I was praying in the church, my mind was instantly freed of all doubt. I was advised . . . that a time would come when I would be in a position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same. I then understood that I would be in a place where I could help my neighbor but I did not understand how this would be possible since there was to be **much coming and going**. . .”*



b) Ministry to Victims of War and Refugees

Beginning in 1639, Vincent began organizing campaigns for the relief of those suffering from war, plague, and famine in Lorraine. This work went on for ten years. He raised funds initially from the Ladies of Charity . . .

Vincent demanded strict accountability. He insisted that he receive regular reports on how relief money was being spent, so that benefactors would know how their donations were used and would be encouraged to give even more.



Fr. Robert Maloney, CM, *Welcoming the Stranger St. Vincent De Paul and the Homeless*, *Vincentiana* 61, #2 (April-June 2017) 270-92).

c) A Christian Education

- *The “little schools”*
- *The Education of the clergy*
- *The Catechism*

“The usefulness [of the catechism] is infinite. First of all, the catechism teaches us faith. It helps us to put our hope in God in our adversities. It helps us to love and fear God and our neighbor, makes us firm against the temptations of the devil, strengthens us against the enemies of the faith, and ultimately obtains paradise for us.” (CCD 13B, p. 34)



Vincentian Creativity

- a) The Company of the Daughters of Charity of the Sick Poor
- b) Ministry to Victims of War and Refugees
- c) A Christian Education

CONCLUSION:

Being Vincent de Paul

Henri de Maupas du Tour
The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul
23 November 1660

“To uncover the full extent of [Vincent’s] zeal you would need to cross the seas and travel to the very limits of Christianity. You would also need to visit prisons, and the darkest dungeons. You would need to visit all the places where the sick are to be found. You would need to go to the great General Hospital.”

“You would need to see the tears of the afflicted that he wiped away and the wounds that he healed. You would need to see the indigent he clothed. You would need to see the five, six or seven thousand people who, according to a reliable source, are assisted daily by the Confraternities of Charity he founded, and the Sisters, and the Ladies of Charity whom he also founded. France, Savoy, Piedmont, Italy, Poland and other faraway places all were the charitable scenes of his charitable works and love.”

**Elements we have highlighted
In Vincent's journey
And his recognition of Christ in the poor**

- 1. Put my faith in the **Christ** who lived among us and still abides with us.*
- 2. Open myself to the **Conversion** that the lessons of each day embody.*
- 3. Join in **Collaboration** with others who think/work similarly.*
- 4. Seek **Creativity** in recognizing and responding to needs of our time.*

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TABLE DISCUSSION:

1. *Remember the post-resurrection stories of Mary Magdalene in the Garden, or the disciples on the road to Emmaus, or the apostles who returned to fishing? They do not recognize Christ immediately when he comes to them. Are there persons in your service whom you might recognize as Christ with a little more attention? What will be the hint?*
2. *Do you sense the need for greater conversion in your life in terms of the needs of our world and those who suffer most? Is some rethinking necessary? How about an examination of conscience?*
3. *“Love is creative unto infinity” (VdP, CCD XI, p.131). Is there a value in re-examining our service not to do more, but to do it better and differently?*

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