

Reflection on the Rule: June – Second Meeting

2.5.1 Essential Virtues

Vincentians seek to emulate St. Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:

- *Simplicity – frankness, integrity, genuineness.*
- *Humility – accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents, and charism, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.*
- *Gentleness – friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others.*
- *Selflessness – dying to our ego with a life of self-sacrifice; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.*
- *Zeal – a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.*

Reflection:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a virtue as *“a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of oneself”* (CCC #1803). Virtues are not attained simply by willing ourselves to acquire them. They first must be desired, so much so that they motivate us to take action. Only when this happens over and over again until it becomes a habit can a virtue eventually become part of one’s very being. Virtues are about seeking the good in oneself and transforming it from what one believes, wants, or does into what one is.

Vincentian Meditation:

The virtues of the society of St. Vincent de Paul reflect the unique vision St. Vincent had of Jesus. Jesus was and is many things, but Vincent found that these five virtues were the most important virtues one could strive for to be more like Jesus. St. Vincent once said, *“Remember, Monsieur, that roses are not gathered except in the midst of thorns and that heroic acts of virtue are accomplished only in weakness”* (vincentians.com). In this manner, Vincent highlights the virtues of humility and selflessness. By choosing to be servants to the poor we can work toward attaining these virtues and thus fulfill Vincent’s vision for our Society.

Discussion:

Which of these Vincentian virtues does your Conference reflect well? Which virtue(s) present(s) the greatest challenge to your conference? Why?

Closing Prayer:

Most gracious Lord, thank you for blessing us with the gift of these virtues and with the gift of the most perfect example of how to live them. Give us guidance when we struggle to follow your example as St. Vincent de Paul envisioned. Help us to be better servants to our neighbors and better Vincentians in every aspect of our lives. We pray that, by your grace, we may come to more fully model Simplicity, Humility, Gentleness, Selflessness and Zeal. Amen.