

REFLECTION

Vincentian Call to Holiness

Sr Therese Haywood DC
21 August 2019



The Rule tells us

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity.

Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward 'or advantage for themselves. ⁱ

These words remind us that our Vincentian vocation calls us to grow in holiness. Holiness is essential for us and not something for other people.

The Vatican II Document Lumen Gentiumⁱⁱ, describes holiness as follows:

- All in the Church are called to holiness, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." I Th. 4:3, Eph. 1:4
- ...It is expressed in many ways by the individuals who, each in his or her own state of life, tend to the perfection of love, thus sanctifying others.
- All are called...to love one another as Christ loved them
- ...all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the perfection of love and by this holiness a more human manner of life is also fostered in earthly society.

Fr Gerald Hughes SJ tells us that

The word holiness directs our attention to God, the living source of all that exists, but it also directs us to the reality of God in our everyday experience.ⁱⁱⁱ

Karl Rahner tells us that

Saints are persons who stand out because they are the initiators and creative models of a path of holiness right for their particular age. ^{iv}

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, the Pope underlines all this while reminding us that holiness is found in many ordinary people.

7. I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness".[4]

In a little book called *Turn Everything to Love* Fr Robert Maloney gives us some pointers about how we can live out this call to holiness. He reminds us that Christ is the centre of our lives and that we foster this relationship by prayer and listening to the word of God. He then goes on to remind us that St Vincent and many others taught us how to live out our service not only in our formal Vincentian works but in all areas of our lives. Our Vincentian service is put into the world through three forms of language:

- The language of works – performing the works of justice and mercy which are a sign that the Kingdom of God is really alive among us;
- Through the language of words: speaking sincerely and truthfully...announcing with deep conviction the Lord's presence, his love, his offer of forgiveness and his acceptance of all.
- Through the language of relationships: being with the poor, working with them, forming a community with them that shows the Lord's love for each individual; developing genuine personal bonds based on respect for the personal dignity of others.

For Vincentians this is not another thing for you to do but rather a recognition that what you are already doing is the path to holiness. Let us also take to heart the words of Pope Francis

32. Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self. To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognize our great dignity. ^v

How do you live out this call to holiness? How can we celebrate with each other this journey to holiness that we are on together?

Sr Therese Haywood DC
Spiritual Adviser, National Council

ⁱ The Rule 2.2 p 18

ⁱⁱ Lumen Gentium Chapter 5 Call to Holiness, #39-40

ⁱⁱⁱ Cry of Wonder. P 273

^{iv} Karl Rahner, "The Church of the Saints" Theological Investigations 3, pp.91-92.

^v *Gaudete Exsultate* no 32.