



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## Contemplation: Go Gently, Pray Much

The challenge of poverty seems always to be urgent, to demand our immediate attention and action. As people of action, Vincentians can even sometimes become impatient with one another as we seek to put into motion new plans and new works to serve the neighbor. St. Vincent would ask us to slow down, reminding us that *“God is never rushed. He does all things in their own good time.”* [[Abelly, Bk I, 227](#)]

Surely, the hungry need not wait to be fed, but in developing new special works, collaborations with other organizations, or long-term plans with our communities, haste is not a virtue. It is partly for this reason that it is the Society’s practice to make decisions by consensus of the members. Although this might appear at times to be a very slow way of making plans, each of us has particular insights into God’s will for us, and none of us can know in advance which of us the Holy Spirit may choose to inspire. Seeking consensus is not about finding a middle ground but about finding the highest ground – the will of God.

Jesus Himself, Vincent pointed out, bided His time for thirty years before embarking on His mission, and even then, He did not choose to establish His church worldwide and all at once. On the contrary, He only laid the groundwork, entrusting the apostles, and in turn, us, to continue the work. If it is God’s will we seek, then it is in God’s way that we can best accomplish it. If, on the other hand we *“act precipitously, we run the risk of thwarting the designs of God.”* [[Ibid, 228](#)]

*“What should we do, then?”* Vincent asks. *“Go gently, pray much to God and act in union of heart.”* [[Ibid, 227](#)] The work that we do, and the works that we seek to build, are for the poor, but also are meant to draw us closer to holiness, which comes not from building a resume of good works, but from doing God’s will.

After all, St Louise remind us, *“It is not enough to visit the poor and to provide for their needs; one’s heart must be totally purged of all self-interest”.* [[SWLM, L.217](#)] It is when we do God’s will for God’s sake, not our own, we can trust that God will provide what is needed for the work to succeed. This also requires us to measure success in God’s terms, for *“We’re mistaken...if we base the outcome of our little works on worldly esteem”.* [[CCD XII:231](#)] Discerning God’s will together, however long it takes, is the path we are called to take.

*“If the work we propose is from him it will succeed and endure, but if it is solely a human enterprise it will not do much good, nor will it last long.”* [[Abelly, Bk I, 228](#)]

Time is on God’s side, and God is on our side.

### Contemplate

Does my Conference sometimes rush to “do something” without fully, prayerfully discerning God’s will?

### Recommended Reading

[A Month with St Vincent de Paul](#) – and take a whole month to read it.