



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

Contemplation: Credit Where It Is Due

When our personal efforts pay off with the results we'd hoped for, we naturally feel a sense of exhilaration, and even pride in our accomplishment. We pat ourselves on the back a little bit, hang a certificate on the wall, or put a trophy on a shelf. We tend to do the same thing collectively, too, when the group we are part of tallies up the results of our work. As part of the group, we feel as if we all share the credit. But does this sort of pride advance our mission in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul?

Blessed Frédéric, reporting on the early works of the Conferences in Lyon, noted that the results were *"modest, but fortunate"*, quickly adding that *"We can build our hope only on the foundation of God's blessing, on the support of our patron saint, and on our alliance with each other."* [1361, Report, 1837] In other words, no good results are possible without God's blessing, Vincent's intercession, and our commitment to work together. We are responsible for what we put into it – to God alone goes the credit of any achievement that results.

Vincent often reminded his followers that their very organization was entirely the work of God. *"It wasn't [Louise]; she didn't think of it! As for me, alas! it never occurred to me."* [CCD IX:358] The Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and we, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, are not the authors of our works. We are only humbly answering God's call to do His work, and if we are committed to doing His will, we can have faith that the results will also be His will, and therefore entirely to His credit, not our own.

Advising his younger cousin Ernest Falconnet's, Frédéric explained that *"one must not make a goal of [glory], but instead accept it as a blessing"* for *"the good man does not spread word of his good deed to gain recognition"*. [32, to Falconnet, 1831] [Humility](#) demands of us that we never lose sight of God's grace, which alone is responsible for any good we may achieve. This applies both individually and collectively.

Vincent once recalled that his mentor, St. Francis de Sales, renowned for his writing and his preaching, recognized that even his great personal gifts were not to his own credit. He recalled Francis saying, *"I noticed...that something went out from me, not through any inspiration of mine and with no forethought, in a way of which I am totally ignorant, but uttered by me through divine impulse."* [CCD XIIIa:82]

Like Francis de Sales, *"Vincentians seek to draw closer to Christ. They hope that someday it will be no longer they who love, but Christ who loves through them."* [Rule, Part I, 2.1] The closer we come to this ideal, the less we will need to remind ourselves that it is He, not us, who alone is responsible for all the good we may do. We claim no glory for ourselves, but if it is Christ who loves through us, then the only reminder of glory we need on our walls is the crucifix through which our eternal reward is earned.

Contemplate

Am I content to participate with quiet gratitude in God's work?

Recommended Reading

['Tis a Gift to be Simple](#)