



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

## Contemplation: Spiritual Refraction

In order to [grow in holiness together](#), as our Rule calls us to do, it is essential that we take the time to truly reflect on our experiences, our growth, and our understanding both individually and with each other.

When we think of “reflecting” in its most common usage, we think of a mirror, which casts back all the light that shines on it, in every detail, and every color. In a similar way, when we reflect, we take our thoughts, our prayers, our growth, our doubts – in short, ourselves – and consider them in the Divine Light; the light of the Gospel, the light of life. In doing so, we seek to grow closer to God by learning to mirror His example, His Light, in our lives.

Each of us “shares in the light of the divine mind” [\[GS, 15\]](#), but no one of us is its source. True reflection, then, begins when we “seek the light at its source, which is to say, *in the heart of God*”. [\[34, to Falconnet, 1831\]](#) Even a glimpse of God’s own light can be overwhelming, and nobody can expect to reflect it perfectly all at once. Yet by creating us to live in community, God shows us the way, just as our Rule does: we grow together towards holiness. [\[Rule, Part I, 2.2\]](#) This is the reason for the reflections that we do as part of every Conference meeting. It is also the reason that the practice of apostolic reflection is the most fruitful.

In apostolic reflection, our sharing begins with listening to one another, with allowing the insights and growth of our friends penetrate our own hearts. In doing so, those insights will in turn change our own understanding of God’s plan for us. And so, we reflect back each other’s thoughts, mingled with our own, in the hope that the light we form will become more perfect. None of us alone is God, but we are all part of one body, and when we act and reflect as one, we each can be the instruments of one another’s salvation.

We are not perfect mirrors, nor are we meant to be. Instead, though each of us is created in God’s image, we each are also unique and unrepeatable [\[CSDC 131\]](#) God’s light shines upon us and within us, bursting forth in our actions and prayers, not reflected but refracted, moved by and moving our own hearts and lives, shining forth in all the colors that originate in the heart of God and [the light of the world](#).

We begin by seeking to reflect the light that God gives us within our own thoughts and prayers, and then, by refracting it as our individual pieces of that light, we hope to unite them all as one in order to better share His light with the world.

### Contemplate

Do I seek the True Light within myself and others in prayer, meditation, and sharing?

### Recommended Reading

[Apostolic Reflection with Rosalie Rendu](#)