



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

Contemplation: Urging Us Gently

Our Rule is very clear about “hoarding”. [\[Rule, Part I, 3.14\]](#) We are not to hold back the money donated to us in order to save it for later. It is meant for the needs presented to us today; for the neighbor’s rainy day, not our own. For most Conferences, though, the fear of having enough money to hoard does not keep us up at night. We are simply grateful to have enough to help the people who call us.

Money, though, is not our only resource, nor even the most important one. Rather, *“giving love, talents, and time is more important than giving money.”* [\[Ibid\]](#) This is why, even when we are out of money, we still make home visits. Understanding that our love and presence are the most important things we can offer, we can sometimes feel that we must fight the urge to “hoard” our time and ourselves by resting. After all, we think, if I am still here, I have more of myself to give; if I have not yet collapsed, I have not yet loved God “with all my strength.”

This drive to consume ourselves completely with the work is something that St. Vincent often cautioned against. The reason was simple, *“even though God commands us to love Him with all our heart and with all our strength, His Goodness doesn’t, however, want us to go so far as to damage and ruin our health by these acts; no, no! God doesn’t ask us to kill ourselves for that.”* [\[CCD XI:204\]](#)

Our bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits need to rest and to be replenished from time to time. If we are not taking the time to reflect upon our work, to share it with each other, and to pray for the neighbors we have visited, we will soon find our hearts emptied and our actions rote. It is important for us to remember this individually and as Conferences. Because we always want to help does not mean that we always truly can. As our first Rule cautioned, *“if the members take the charge of too many families they would be led to visit them only in a passing way to do no more for them than just to distribute alms.”* [\[1835 Rule, Art. 22 notes\]](#)

We all understand that monthly envelopes or other fundraisers allow us to continue to generously offer material assistance. Fundraising isn’t hoarding. In a similar way, if we truly believe that our presence and our love are the most important things we offer, then we need to allow time for prayer, reflection, and rest to give us an even greater treasury of compassion and love to share.

The poor will always be with us, so the work will never be done, but as St. Vincent cautioned, if we do more than we are able, we will end up unable to do anything. Let’s instead remember that *“The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can be done reasonably, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time.”* [\[CCD I:92\]](#)

Contemplate

Do I take the time for rest and prayer so that I can serve the poor cheerfully and gratefully?

Recommended Reading

[Apostolic Reflection with Rosalie Rendu](#)