



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

## Contemplation: We Are Called and We Are Sent

Ours is a missionary church. For it to be the Catholic (universal) church, this is a necessary condition. The church's mission is to "*preach the Gospel to all*" so that they may "*share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.*" [CCC, 849-50] But what is "mission"? The word is rooted in the Latin *mittere*, meaning "to send." This root also gives us the word "Mass" our name for the celebration of the Eucharist. Just as Christ in the Eucharist is blessed, broken, and shared, so we are called first to receive that gift, and then sent forth to share it.

In a similar way, Vincentians are first called, and then sent on a mission, which in turn serves the larger mission of the church. The mission of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in the United States is twenty-seven simple words: *A network of friends, inspired by Gospel Values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.* [Manual, 47]

While many people may first identify the Society by its works in service of the poor and marginalized, "service to people in need" is the last thing mentioned in our mission. The statement begins by defining who we are: a network of friends. We are friends with each other and with the neighbor, united in a mutual love with Christ at the center. And we are not only friends, but "a network of friends," united with each other across all of our Conferences, Councils, states, and regions.

So, what does it mean to be "inspired by gospel values," which also characterizes our friendship? The word inspire comes from the Latin *spīrāre*, meaning to breathe, the same root as the word spirit. We breathe the Gospel in, we are filled by it, it is part of us. Gospel, from the Old English *gōdspell*, means good news, so in a sense, asking the value of the good news is a question which answers itself; its value is that it is good. Yet this phrase echoes the challenge that was answered by our founders in 1833 when they were asked to "show the good of the church in the world."

The good of the church, like the mission of the church, is the Gospel – the promise of eternal life in union with our Creator. It is the good news that Jesus came to proclaim, and to which he calls all of us. He calls us (vocation) and sends us (mission). On this mission and in this vocation, we grow in holiness and build a more just world not only through contemplation, but through action - our service to people in need, rendered not as a cold transaction, but through relationships that fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

In the Mass, the bread is blessed, broken, and shared, no longer bread but the body of Christ. Vincentians also share bread, which we share as friends [for love alone](#). May our loving service offer the neighbor a glimpse of God's great love and draw us both closer to Him. That is our mission.

### Contemplate

Do I try to keep in mind always that I am sent to share God's love?

### Recommended Reading

[Mystic of Charity](#)