



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

Contemplation: A Boundless Reserve

“Money,” our Rule tells us, “*must not be hoarded.*” [\[Rule, Part I, 3.14\]](#) Members of the Society have always understood this to mean that every dollar we have is meant to serve the needs before us today; we do not save up for a rainy day, because, for the neighbor in need, it is raining right now, and the “*the funds donated to the Conference belong to the poor*”. [\[Manual, 23\]](#)

As our original Rule explained, our charitable works are entirely optional; they are not bills to be paid or budgeted in advance, and so they should be paid with all the generosity our current balance can afford. [When we have little, we give a little](#); when we have much, we give abundantly. It’s okay to run out of money, for “*nothing is more Christian than to trust one’s self to Providence*”, while having “*a disposable capital which we never touch, to lay out beforehand a budget as in a relief association, are proceedings essentially contrary to the spirit of our Society.*” [\[Rule, Art. 19 note, 1835\]](#)

In practice, we often find that when we offer everything we have to the poor, a new donation arrives unexpectedly, or the number of calls for help drop off for a while. Blessed Frédéric, reflecting on lessons learned over the Society’s first few years, recalled that they had hardly any money at the beginning, and it seemed to him “*a great folly*”, but God provided, and he was now “*very much convinced that to do works of charity, it is never necessary to worry about pecuniary resources, they always come.*” [\[121, to his mother, 1836\]](#)

It is always well for us to remember that money and other material assistance are not the most important things we give. It is our friendship, our understanding, our presence, and our love that are most needed. Yet there are times, perhaps especially when we do not have material resources enough to meet the needs of a neighbor, that we can become reluctant to offer our presence and our hearts.

We naturally “[rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep](#)”, and we would much rather rejoice! After all, sharing the sorrows and pain of another can bring sorrow and pain to ourselves. Yet it is that very tear we fear to shed, the shared tear, that St. Vincent tells us is itself “*an act of love, causing people to enter one another’s hearts and to feel what they feel...*” [\[CCD XII:221\]](#) If we truly seek, then, to serve [for love alone](#), we can never budget our tears or our presence to be offered only along with material assistance.

Our treasuries and food banks may dwindle, but just as Providence so often makes itself known through generous donations, our Divine Donor provides us with a boundless reserve of love that is given to us only to be shared.

Contemplate

Do I sometimes “hoard” myself? Do I sometimes “hoard” my love?

Recommended Reading

[15 Days of Prayer with Blessed Frédéric Ozanam](#)