



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

## Contemplation: Keep Your Heart Ready

When driving on a long trip, we can easily let our minds become distracted by the radio, a phone call, or just our own thoughts and worries, causing us to miss a turn or an exit. We suddenly find ourselves in an unfamiliar place, wondering where we are, and how we got there. It can be easily agreed that when this happens, the worst thing to do would be to simply keep driving, rather than pulling over to figure out how we got here, and where to go next.

Yet how often, in the spiritual journey of our lives, do we simply keep driving, without pausing to reflect on where we are and how we got here? What are the graces we've received, to what is God calling us? In our Vincentian Spirituality, we are taught that God speaks His will to us through the people and events of our lives. To fully discern His will then, requires that we not only be attentive to each moment and person we encounter, but that we take the time to reflect later about where they have led us, and with the knowledge we've gained since then, whether they can guide further on our journey.

*"When you make these reflections on your interior state,"* St Vincent wrote, *"you must raise your mind to the consideration of His Adorable Goodness... keep your heart ready to receive the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit."* [\[CCD V:166\]](#) When we miss a turn, or fail to read a sign, our God waits patiently to point it out to us again, if only we take the time to look for Him.

All the many gifts we receive are meant to be shared, and so St. Elizabeth Ann Seton calls us *"alone in the secret of your heart [to] reflect ... what use have I made of the grace of my God?"* [\[CW 3, 262\]](#) When Frédéric considered his many gifts – his parents, his education, his many friends – he saw that *"often I am led to reflect that it wishes from me something more than common virtue..."* [\[97, to Curnier, 1835\]](#)

Guiding each other through the wilderness, we close our eyes from time to time, recalling each turn, each landmark, each indication of our progress and our destination. *"It is not enough to take a superficial glance;"* Frédéric said, *"you need repeated reflection."* [\[34, to Falconnet, 1834\]](#) And so, while our individual reflection is vital, we also reflect together in our Conference meetings, not only on the readings we may share, but on our personal journeys towards God. We share our path, our direction, and our progress with one another in the hopes that we may all arrive together at the Kingdom to which we are called.

It is not our own will we seek to discern, but God's will for us. To do that, we must "pull over" from time to time. As St Louise said, *"The time has surely come for me to reflect on myself in the sight of God."* [\[SWLM, L.110\]](#)

### Contemplate

Do I "pull over" often enough to reflect on where I have been, and where I am going?

### Recommended Reading

[Praying With Vincent de Paul](#)