



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

Contemplation: Be Quite Cheerful!

[The Lord loves a cheerful giver](#), we are taught, and yet, when a friend needs a favor that seems inconvenient, when a call to the Conference helpline disrupts our plans for the evening, or whenever the needs of others call us to give not only our time, but to give the time we had reserved for something else, our good cheer can sometimes fade a little bit. Not that we would fail to help, but perhaps we do so at times with more of a grim determination borne of our sense of duty, rather than cheerful gratitude for having been called.

St. Vincent reminds us that it is not the poor whom we serve, but Christ Himself who holds out His hand for food, for comfort, and for understanding. We *“are serving Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And that is as true as that we are here...Go to visit a chain gang, you'll find God there. Look after those little children, you'll find God there. How delightful...! You go into poor homes, but you find God there. Again...how delightful!”* [\[CCD IX:199\]](#)

It should be a delight, shouldn't it? Since everything we have belongs to God, including our time, our works of charity can never truly be interruptions. If this is, as we believe, truly a vocation – a calling – then we have the great joy to be directly called by Christ Himself time and time again!

We do not visit the poor in order to earn God's grace, which is always unmerited and freely given. But we do receive His grace, and one very important dimension of it is joy. Imagine a small child who has just cleaned his room *without being asked*, and he cannot wait to run to tell his parents what he has done. He is bursting with joy, because he knows that he has pleased them! In a similar way, when we serve for love alone, knowing that we serve is our Lord and Savior, knowing that He considers all we have done as done to Himself, we, like that small child, feel a deep joy within our hearts, a joy that we cannot help but share.

Perhaps the most common advice St. Vincent gave, which appears hundreds of times in his letters, is to *“be quite cheerful”* in the face of difficulties, when suffering illness, when doing unpleasant work, when in need, and especially when serving the poor. *“Be quite cheerful, I beg you,”* he said, *“Oh, what great reason people of good will have to be cheerful!”* [\[CCD I:145\]](#)

We can't but be cheerful givers when we let the joy of God enter our hearts along with His will, and in return, our joy and our cheer will only grow. As Blessed Frédéric once put it: *“He who brings a loaf of bread to the home of a poor man often brings back a joyful and comforted heart. Thus, in this sweet business of charity, the expenses are low, but the returns are high.”* [1361, to the Society, 1837]

Contemplate

Do I perform my works of charity as an obligation, or an occasion for joy?

Recommended Reading

[500 More Little Prayers for Vincentians](#)