

The Prophetic Dimension of the Vincentian Charism

In Light of the Social Doctrine of the Church

4

17th Century

St. Vincent:

“the obligations of justice have priority over those of charity (CCD:VII:633)”

1971 Synod of Bishops: “Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one’s neighbor.” (Justice in the World, #33)

20th Century



17th Century

St. Vincent: “justice may be accompanied by mercy” (CCD:I:449); “there is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice (CCD:II:68)”

“Those who think they can live the supernatural virtue of love without taking into account its corresponding natural foundations, which include duties of justice, deceive themselves. Charity [...] requires the practice of justice and it alone makes us capable of it.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, p.331, #583)

21st Century





St. Vincent's position was revolutionary for his time.

What was unheard of during the time of St. Vincent, has today become part of the magisterium of the Church.



Saint Vincent intervened directly and indirectly in politics, in order to obtain the well-being of poor men and women who were condemned and dying of hunger.

Sister Pilar writes:
“Sisters and brothers, political neutrality does not exist. In an inter-related world such as ours every action (whether active or passive) has a political meaning.”



“In Saint Vincent’s writing [his] sense of justice led him to protect the welfare of those employed by the Congregation, something that was unheard of at that time.

Three centuries before social security came into existence Vincent wrote to one of the superiors of the Congregation: If you can pay your servant’s wages for the four months during which he was ill, as well as the expenses of his doctor and medicines, I think that will be a good idea, since he is a poor man and a good servant (CCD:VI:97).”



We could continue with an endless list of examples that reveal how our Founder was a defender of justice and the rights of the poor.



Reflection questions

- How often do we think of our “obligations” to those who are poor?
- Why do some think it is not Vincentian to become involved in speaking out publicly?
- Are we aware of our obligations to those we employ?