

# The Prophetic Dimension of the Vincentian Charism

In Light of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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# Saint Vincent and Human Promotion

Vincent always joined assistance to some form of human promotion. He looked for different means that would enable those who were poor to become aware of their situation, their rights, their possibilities ... means that would enable them to become the protagonists of their integral development.



# Examples

Sister Pilar points out three articles which provide us with an image of Vincent that might be somewhat distinct from that which we commonly hold.

**1.** “All those who were found begging in the streets and at the churches during the week, or about whom the Ladies had made justifiable complaints, would receive nothing the following Sunday... Since the assembly did not want to encourage laziness among the able-bodied poor or their families, they were to be given only what was necessary to supplement the modest salaries from their work” (CCD:XIIIb:69-70).



**2.** “Their [the Ladies] original intention was to assist only those who cannot work nor earn their living and would be in danger of dying of starvation if someone did not assist them. In fact, as soon as anyone is strong enough to work, tools of his trade are bought for him and nothing more is given to him. Accordingly, the alms are not for those able to work on the fortifications or to do something else, but seriously ill sick persons, orphans, or the elderly” (CDD:IV:188)

**3.** “They [the Ladies] would also like to enable all the other poor people who have no land — men as well as women — to earn their own living, by giving the men some tools for working and the girls and women spinning wheels and flax or linen for spinning — but only the poorest.” (CCD:VIII:82-83)



# Human promotion

Sister Pilar describes “human promotion”:

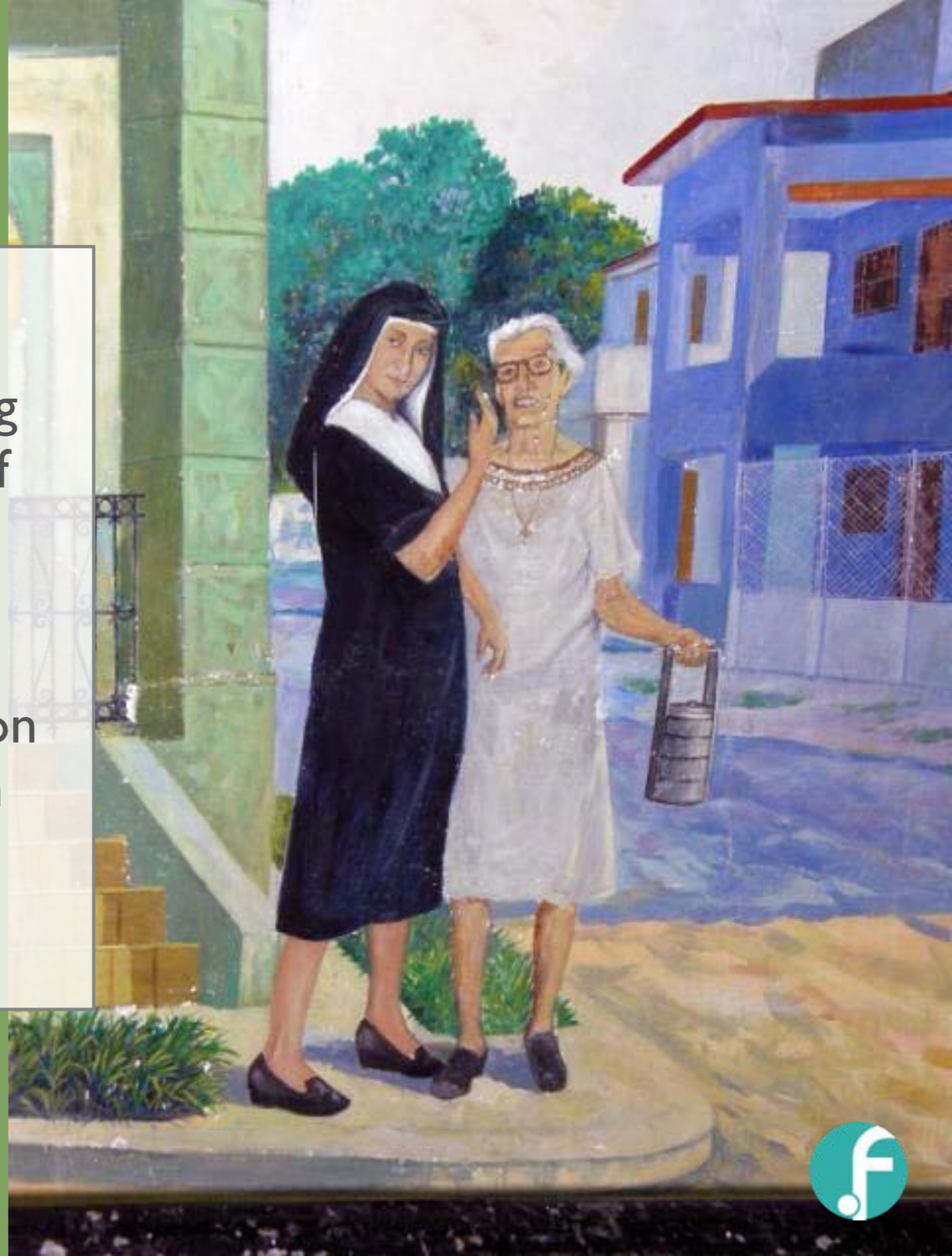
- the poor are able to become responsible actors in their own promotion
- awaken their personal development ... bettering their situation in both the medium and long range
- constant concern for the promotion of the whole person
- respect for the other person’s ability to organize his/her life

What all these expressions have in common is the difference between a "hand out" and a "hand up".



Therefore here we are not dealing with problem solving but rather with a process of accompaniment.

A hand up literally means helping someone stand up on their own. It does not mean carrying them if they can walk.





Mother Guillemin in 1963: "The better we know Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, the more astonished we are in seeing to what extent they are relevant today."



### HIV/AIDS

DREAM program in Chalucane, Mozambique.



### Pastoral & Prison Ministry

Food and pastoral care for prisoners in Nouna, Burkina Faso.



### Literacy

Education and literacy program for tribal children in Orissa, India.



### Human Trafficking Prevention

Educating parents about crimes of trafficking against children and youth.



### Job Training

Technical training in Clorinda, Formosa, Argentina.



### Medical Care

Medical supplies for Daughters of Charity health centers in Eritrea.



From the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: “The poor should be seen not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone.” (p.253, #449)





# Integral Human Development

Today we tend to think of a hand up as helping a person beyond their immediate need. Much of the social doctrine of the Church stresses addressing the root causes of various forms of poverty. It is encapsulated in the phrase “integral human development”.

Pope Francis, deeply rooted in a tradition forcefully articulated by Pope Paul VI 50 years ago and affirmed by his successors, has recently elevated the concept of integral human development. He merged 4 separate Vatican departments (Dicasteries) in the Vatican into one super department focused on Integral Human Development.



# Reflection questions

- How aware am I of riches of the Church's social doctrine on integral human development?
- How aware am I of how closely the approaches of Vincent and Louise foreshadow the concept of integral human development?
- How are my horizons challenged by the concept of integral human development?