

Spiritual Readings for the month of March 2022

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

What is Character?

Character can be acquired intentionally, by proactively developing habits of the heart, mind, body, and soul. It can also be acquired passively by enduring life's inconveniences, difficulties, and unavoidable suffering. But there are no shortcuts. You cannot hack your way to character. It is the greatest investment you can make in yourself.

How do you build character? With virtue. Virtues are the building blocks of character. This about this short list of virtues: patience, kindness, humility, gentleness, perseverance, truthfulness, courage, temperance, justice, faithfulness, and goodwill.

The only way to genuinely improve your life is with virtue. You cannot improve your life in any meaningful way without improving as a human being. Any improvement that does not come from expanding your human potential as a human being is cosmetic.

Virtue is also the only way for a society to make genuine progress. Progress built on anything other than character and virtue is a mirage.

(Source: Kelly, Matthew. Life is Messy. Blue Sparrow, pp.177-179.)

Questions for Reflection:

- Would your life improve if you had more of the virtues mentioned above?
How would you be a better spouse, parent, and friend?
- What one virtue would you like to work on first? Why?
- As Vincentians, how can we teach these virtues to our Neighbours in Need?

Vincentian Ruth Morales, St. Joseph's Streetsville, Peel

The Path to a Better Future

*Excerpt taken from PG 113 of Pope Francis' 2020 book Let Us Dream,
The Path to a Better Future*

It's the same problem as ever: poverty conceals itself in shame. In order to see, understand, and feel it, you have to come close. You can't know poverty from a distance; you have to touch it. To recognize and come close – that's the first step. The second step consists in responding practically and immediately, because a concrete act of mercy is always an act of justice.

But a third step is necessary if we are not to fall into mere welfarism: to reflect on the first two steps and open ourselves to the necessary structural reforms. An authentic politics designs those changes alongside, with, and by means of all those affected, respecting their culture and their dignity. The only time it is right to look down at someone is when we are offering our hand to help them get up. As I once put it in a talk to some religious men and women: "The problem is not feeding the poor, or clothing the naked, or visiting the sick, but rather recognizing that the poor, the naked, the sick, prisoners, and the homeless have the dignity to sit at our table, to feel 'at home' among us, to feel part of the family. This is a sign that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst."

Questions for Reflection:

- In our experience as Vincentians of coming close and touching, what do we see about poverty?
- How does the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul invite neighbours-in-need to sit at our table?

Vincentian Sr. Kathy Haugh, Nativity of Our Lord, Etobicoke