



SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT
DE PAUL INTERNATIONAL
COUNCIL GENERAL

GLOBAL TRAINING

VISITING THE POOR





Visiting the poor gives us
the experience necessary
to judge social issues

FRANCOIS LALLIER AUGUST 1837



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CHRIST THE MODEL FOR THE VISITOR

He meets each one in person

He is attentive and compassionate to distress, to needs

He frees from sin but also from a spirit of despair, worry and poor self-image

He releases

He heals

He evangelizes



FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST, THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

- Meets each one in person
- Seeks, finds and visits anyone in need who requests help
- Listens with kindness
- Shares their worries and joys as true friends
- Consoles and gives hope
- Advises without imposing solutions
- Encourages reconciliations
- Evangelises



The visit is the main work of the Society

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WHAT IS THE VISIT



THE VINCENTIAN VISIT IS...

- **A prayer**
a meeting with a “living tabernacle” because Christ is present hidden in the person we meet
- **An act of self-denial to go to the other**
“You came to me” (Mt 25, 36-37)
- **A meeting between two people**
which confronts us with the truth of our being and encourages us to conversion
- **A demonstration of the tenderness of God to the weakest**
We hope that in our caring, they may catch a glimpse of God’s great love for them” (R.2.1)
- **A regular, long-term commitment**
It takes time to get to know each other and build friendship



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CALLS THAT COME IN... OR THAT WE INITIATE

- From the Lord himself
 - It is HE who puts people needing help in our path.
 - “See! I stand at the door and knock”* (Rev 3, 20)
 - Let us learn to :
 - Listen to our surroundings
 - be ready to relieve poverty
- From social institutions: hospitals, Residential homes, Prisons
- From the parish
- From Vincentian centres
- From our networks of friends, neighbours, local businesses

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BEFORE THE VISIT: HOW TO PREPARE



PREPARING IN THE CONFERENCE

A preliminary contact has been made with the person visited. Then...

1. Discussion in the Conference about the person
2. Assessment of need and the response to make
3. To decide together
 - Choice of the visitor(s), depending on their affinities, availability
 - Visit in pairs
 - Time of visit
 - Frequency of visits: consult the person, don't impose

The visit involves the whole group. All the members keep the person visited in their prayers



PERSONAL PREPARATION

1. Planning the visit
2. Preparing in heart and mind
Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament or
prayer to the Holy Spirit (R. 1.7)
3. “Prayer on the stair” “Lord, May we love and respect them,
Understand their deeper needs
and shares their burdens and joys as true friends”
 - ✓ Mental and physical preparation to meet the
person in need and their poverty
 - ✓ Sounds, smells and the surroundings they live in
 - ✓ Being aware of our own poverty and frailty
 - ✓ Dressing to suit the situation

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DURING THE VISIT: HOW TO LIVE THE ENCOUNTER



TIPS ON COMMUNICATION WHEN ARRIVING AT THE HOME

- Introduce yourself and smile, thank them for welcoming you
Our visit is not an intrusion. We are coming as mediators and friends.
Foster trust and calmness. Pledge confidentiality
- Be ready to listen: a kind, calm attitude
- Put yourself on the same level as the person (in the figurative and the physical sense)
- Be positive, emphasizing any good and hopeful signs
- Pray, ask the Lord to help you: we are only tools, “the hands of God in the world”.
- If prayer is part of their life, ask “May we say an Our Father and Hail Mary for your intentions?” Maybe add their name-saints: Pray for us

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION KEEPING THE CONVERSATION GOING

- Discuss ordinary things
- Ask open questions
- Ask further questions for mutual understanding and by probing gently, enable them to reveal any deeper problems: “listen between the words and see beyond the appearances” (R 1.11)
- Summarise what has been said
- Pay attention to body language: look people in the eye
- Match their mood but keep a sense of humour: “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7)

TEMPTATIONS DURING THE VISIT

- Pretending to be a professional
We are not investigators but mediators and friends!!
- Only visiting when we can provide material help
- Neglecting some forms of poverty: moral, psychological, social, spiritual
- Judging our service to be useless
- Getting stuck in a rut
- Raising their expectations beyond our ability to deliver

OTHER TEMPTATIONS

- Judging the other person and thinking we are better than them. Instead look for something to admire
- Not tuning into the other person
- Talking about ourselves too much
- Being indiscreet or intrusive, so they feel uncomfortable
- Looking at our watch means “We want to go!”

END OF THE VISIT

Plan the next visit

(they decide, we don't impose)

Make sure the farewell is simple and pleasant

“Thank you for inviting us into your house!”



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AFTER THE VISIT



SUPPORT AND SOLUTIONS IN THE CONFERENCE

- Take notes after the visit
NEVER DURING THE VISIT
- Review the visit in the Conference
Mention what went badly or topics to avoid
Mention anything you found inspirational
- Reflect on solutions in the Conference
Sharing ideas or suggestions helps us cope with problems
But we do not impose these solutions:
We always respect the person's own wishes

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Humanity has never been richer, but it reaches depths of moral and spiritual destitution because of the poverty in our inter-personal relations and of globalised indifference.

CARDINAL ROBERT SARAH

PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND
SACRAMENTAL PRACTICE



CHANGE THE WORLD IN HUMILITY THROUGH THE VISIT

Grace helps, despite our frailty to:

Encourage Human Beings to be more loving

- In their wealth / in their poverty
- In their suffering / in their wellbeing
- In their self-sufficiency

Give Hope and Joy

- Encourage interaction and friendship
- Give reasons for hope
- Above all, give love and attention to the other person

Money cannot solve everything

“The poor need our hands to serve them, our hearts to love them”

St Mother Teresa



**“THE TIME HAS COME TO GO OUT
AND SEEK THOSE WHO DO NOT
SEND FOR YOU”**

BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

