

## *Active Contemplative*

(excerpted from For Your Love Alone)

There are two specific aspects of the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul that we follow as part of our Vincentian spirituality. Those two are imitating Christ and being active contemplatives. We are asked to imitate Christ in His words and actions. Throughout his governance of the various organizations he started, Vincent formed his rules around the words and actions of Jesus. Being an active contemplative is in effect imitation of Jesus as well. He showed us that we must be prayerful but also put our faith into action.

Just recently, I read part of a speech that Pope John Paul II gave in April of 1980. His focus was on both prayer and action. I would like to share those words with you.

*For you lay people, apostolic life requires effective openings for the various means you have of making the evangelical “leaven” penetrate. It involves activities and responsibilities in all areas of human existence: family, professional, social, cultural, political. And it is by taking on these responsibilities competently and in profound union with God that you respond to your vocation as lay people and Christians that you sanctify the world.*

*To remain united with God in carrying out your responsibilities is a vital necessity for bearing witness to His love. And only a life based on the sacraments, together with a life of prayer, can increase this intimacy with the Lord.*

*Taking the time to pray, and to foster prayer and its activities with Bible, theological, and doctrinal studies; to experience Christ and His grace through regular attendance at the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist – these are the fundamental requirements of every profoundly Christian life. And thus, the Holy Spirit will be the source of both your action and contemplation, which will then interpenetrate, sustaining each other and bearing much fruit.*

*This profound unity of prayer and action is the basis of all spiritual renewal, especially among lay people. It is the basis of evangelization and the great work of building up the world according to God’s plan. It must be the foundation of the life of our movements and their methods of formation with a view to evangelization.*

Even though Pope John Paul II is not specifically addressing Vincentians, he could just as well have been. He is emphasizing the importance of a blend in our lives between prayer and action. This is also the basis of our ministry within the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Society promotes our growth in holiness, our prayer life, as a foundation for the work we do. Pope John Paul also emphasizes that it is an important part of our formation as well. Let us focus on this growth in all we do. Let us keep the blend – the balance – between action and prayer.