

## ***By the Measure with Which You Measure***

(excerpted from *For Your Love Alone* by Michael Syslo)

It is one of the most repeated themes throughout the Gospels. With the measure with which you measure, so you will be measured. It is stated in different ways: in direct statements as well as in parables. It is one of those themes that can instill fear and frustration as well as confidence and hope.

An example is the parable of the talents. In this parable, each of three stewards or servants is given a different amount of money by the master before he heads off on some journey. The expectation of the master is that his servants will do what they can to increase the funds given and provide him with a profit when he returns. As you probably remember, the one given the most money used the money wisely and provided the master with a good profit. He was rewarded for his efforts and his production with advancement. The second servant was given a smaller amount of money; but, like the first, he worked hard and provided the master with a good profit. Again, the master rewarded him with an appropriate advancement. But the third servant was afraid to do anything. He was more afraid of losing what he had than providing a profit for his master. So, in the end, because he did nothing positive and really did not even try, the little he was given was taken away and he was punished for being lazy and foolish. Each servant was measured by the way he responded to the responsibility given him and each received his just reward.

Another theme along the same lines is the simple idea of forgiveness. Our Lord told us in multiple ways that if we are not willing to forgive others, then our heavenly Father will not forgive us our transgressions. Imagine the heavy burden that is. And people speak of this casually. Whether it is a minor transgression or a serious one, many people will say as if it means nothing: "I will never forgive him (or her) for what he (she) said (or did)!" Can you even imagine how you will feel on judgment day if our Lord closes the gate to heaven to you because you were unwilling to forgive someone for what they did or said to you? We will all be judged by the same standard that we judge others.

Christians all over the world pray the Lord's Prayer on a regular basis. We say it during Mass, we say it as part of daily prayers, and we say it in our Conference prayers. "Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" As part of our Vincentian ministry, do we forgive those who come to us for help? Do we forgive them for taking up our personal time? Do we forgive them for burdening us with their problems? Do we forgive them for making poor choices in their lives that may have gotten them into this position? Do we forgive them for not being able to fix their own problems? Do we forgive them for stretching or improvising the truth? Do we forgive them for not taking our advice? Forgiveness is a significant part of what we offer as Vincentians.

How about the way we simply treat others? Matthew 25 is pretty clear. Our Lord tells us that how we treat others is taken by Him as treatment toward His person. If we help others in their need, He will consider it being done to and for Him. If we ignore those in need, again He will treat it as if we ignored Him. We must be realistic! There are millions of people throughout the world who are in need at any point in time and we obviously cannot help everyone. But we each know, just as our Lord knows, who we could have helped and should have helped but did not – or to the degree we shoulda, woulda, coulda.

It is the effort that we make and the way we treat others that is reflected back to us. This is also shown in our ministry as Vincentians. There are plenty of times that we Vincentians come away from an encounter with our Lord wondering if we did what we should have or what we could have. We should never get to a point of helping people simply because they ask, and we are afraid to make a wrong decision. We should also never get to a point of turning people away simply because we helped them last month. Those are not decisions based on love. Our Lord is asking us to love those who come to us in the best way possible, whether that is a “yes” or “no.”

One of the comments I regularly hear from Vincentians is that we do not have enough funds, so we have to limit what we can give to each individual. Somehow our Vincentians must have read somewhere that we have to help everyone in the same way; otherwise it just would not be fair. And besides, we will just run out of money.

Well, the Society promotes the idea of treating each case on its own merit. Look at each individual (or family) that comes to you and decide which way is the best way to help. If it means spending the treasury down to zero, then do so. The measure with which you measure will be measured back to you. No one can out do God in generosity. I have witnessed over and over again the scenario where a Conference spends its funds down to nothing and, before they know it, there is a large donation that comes in. With the generosity with which you give, so God will be generous to you.

We need to be able to walk the talk. Did you ever tell someone to trust in God – maybe not in those exact words, but something like it? We need to be able to live the words that we preach. With the measure with which we measure, it will be measured back to us.