

Deeply Rooted

(excerpted from For Your Love Alone)

“*Nature demands that trees be deeply rooted before they can bear fruit, and this is a gradual process.*” (St. Vincent de Paul) This statement combined with the gospel value, that only works performed out of love have value before God, places a burden and responsibility on Vincentians. There are two parts to St. Vincent’s statement that we must be concerned with. First, we must be deeply rooted in our faith and ministry before there can be real fruit from our works. And second, this is a gradual process.

To address the first part, we must ask ourselves “what is the Society doing to help its members become deeply rooted in their faith and ministry?” This question has multiple answers.

- The Society promotes the *active* presence of a Spiritual Advisor at all Conference and Council gatherings.
- In our meetings, we provide and encourage prayer and faith sharing.
- The Society has created specific training programs (Ozanam Orientation) which cover the basics of the Society that are required for new members and officers. Although this is required in the initial stages of membership, members are encouraged to occasionally revisit this training to reacquaint themselves with who we are.
- We encourage a new member process which includes a period of on-the-job training and discernment.
- There are various other formal workshops offered that cover different aspects of this ministry.
- There are spiritual development days (days of recollection, retreats, etc.) that are offered for our member growth.
- The National Office created the *Serving in Hope* program to offer members an opportunity for ongoing reflection on who we are and what we are about. It is recommended that this video/workbook program be used during Conference meetings for the spiritual reading and discussion.
- We encourage the study and discussion at Conference meetings of the Rule, Bylaws, and the Manual of the Society.
- The National Office has developed a special leadership retreat (*Invitation for Renewal*) to help our leadership get more deeply rooted in the Society.
- The National Office has provided *Vincentian Reflections on the Weekly Readings* to help our members grow in their faith. It is recommended that these be used during Conference meetings for the spiritual reading and discussion.
- There are numerous publications made available to our members about our Vincentians (those canonized and beatified) to help inspire them about our ministry.

- All of our special gatherings promote our essential elements of spirituality, friendship, and service.

Yes, our Society is doing a lot to help our members become deeply rooted in their faith and ministry.

And, now to address the second part of Vincent's statement. We human beings want everything to happen today, now. It is in our nature to want immediate satisfaction for each of our desires and needs. But this is not God's way. God's way is slow and sure. It takes time to learn and grow. Unfortunately, the path is laden with the many mistakes we make in the process of growing. But it is still the sure path. Just like trees, we need time to go through the feeding and nurturing stage before we are ready to bear fruit.

Check out Luke 6:43-45. We may never see the fruit we bear, but we can have confidence that God will.