

The Many Faces of Vincentians

(excerpted from *It's All About Love* by Mike Syslo)

“The vocation of the Society’s members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love.” (*Part I of the Rule, 1.2*) Bearing witness does not always mean using words. Our actions speak much louder than our words – have you heard that before!?” “It is said that a true Christian is not one who acts like one, but one who *reacts* like one.” (*Our Walk in His Footsteps*, Brian R. Casey) And, bearing witness does not only mean when we are serving those in need. Bearing witness must be part of who we are.

Vincentians regularly find themselves in circumstances that call for them to reflect God’s love to those they encounter in their ministry. This could be on home visits, in the pantry, in the parish office, when meeting someone at the gas station or other location. In every one of these situations, it is not always the words we use, but also our tone of voice, the look in our eyes, the position of our legs or arms – very simply, our body language. Sometimes, it does not matter what words you use if your body is telling a different story. A smile, a friendly look, a hand shake can all make a person feel welcome and loved. A stare, a frown, stiffness in the body will say just the opposite.

Vincentians regularly find themselves in circumstances that call for them to reflect God’s love to those they work with or invite to join them in their ministry. This could be at Conference meetings, on home visits, in their pantry work, during a recruitment effort, while training new members. Again, in all of these situations, our body language may be telling a totally different story than our words. We may reflect a friendly, loving, welcoming presence in both our words and actions. Or we may show someone that we are only tolerating their presence and would be much happier if they would just go away.

As Vincentians, as Christians, as human beings we wear many different hats each day. It all depends on the circumstances. With the many hats, we wear many different faces. It is up to us to be sure that the witness we give is positive and loving. It is up to us to be sure the witness we give is reflective of our Lord Jesus. And we must always be sure our words and actions tell the same story.