

## *What is in It for Us?*

(excerpted from For Your Love Alone)

Peter is one of my favorite people in the Bible. He is so human. He has strengths and weaknesses. He is not afraid to ask questions or say what he feels whether the time and place is appropriate or not. On one occasion, Jesus was talking to His disciples about how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God - that it is impossible for man to do on his own. "Then Peter spoke up, 'We have left everything to follow you!'" (Mark 10:28) Implied in his statement was a question: if it is so impossible, then why have we left everything, what is in it for us?

What is in it for us? That is a question we all ask from time to time – not necessarily related to our spiritual life but related to life in general. It is not that we are completely selfish beings, but it is a proven fact that people only do things when it is of benefit to them in some way. It may be something that tangibly benefits us like a prize of some sort or something intangible like making us happy. It may be experiencing something pleasant or avoiding something unpleasant. The actual tangible benefit does not even have to come directly to us if the end result pleases us. So, the question is not an unreasonable one: What is in it for us?

I am willing to bet good money that the question has been asked millions of times by Vincentians over the last 175+ years. We have all made sacrifices to answer God's call. We have given up much to help other people in need. Most every one of us can probably say we had other things we could have been doing when it was time to go on a home visit, work in the pantry or at the store, go to a Conference meeting, visit someone in the nursing home or hospital, or any number of SVdP activities that call to us. We have all given our share from our personal resources as well: money, food, clothing, furniture. As they say: blood, sweat and tears.

So, what is in it for us Vincentians? What do we get for saying, "Here I am, Lord; I come to do Your Will." Well, let us start with some things we experience on home visits: the satisfying feeling that comes with helping someone truly in need; the frustration that comes with not being able to satisfy a particular need; the joy of seeing the smile on a child's face when you bring in the groceries; the nausea of

walking into a filthy home smelling of spoiled food, urine and feces; the hope that comes with lining up the resources needed for a family; the fear of entering a notoriously bad neighborhood; the exhilaration that comes from knowing we've made a difference; the disgust that comes from having helped someone working the system; the excitement that comes when all the pieces start to come together; the anger in being around an abusive situation; and the calm that comes when we realize that God has been with us along this journey.

But it is much more than what we experience in our encounters with those in need. We have the benefits of simply participating in the Society: growing in our call to holiness through shared prayer, reflections on our spiritual readings, attendance at retreats and days of recollections, participating in special liturgies; growing in friendship with our fellow Vincentians, learning from them, helping them, guiding and supporting each other; following our Vincentian journey of growth in this ministry from Conference membership through various leadership roles. Every bit of this draws us closer to God.

And then there is the ultimate prize. It is what Jesus was talking about when Peter asked the question. We will have the joy that only God can provide for us - that which is impossible for man. That is what is in it for us.