

Creativity and Ingenuity

The Vincentian Story

The Vincentian story is one that is full of creativity and ingenuity. St Vincent de Paul saw the needs in front of him and took the risk to start new ventures and new ways of answering these needs. He began groups of women serving the sick in parishes, something that was a new and innovative way to respond to the needs he encountered. He also knew that he could not do anything alone and drew together many people from various backgrounds; politicians, military officers, royalty, professors, widows, wealthy women of the aristocracy, jailors, farm labourers, merchants, young village women and cloistered nuns; who could help him find ways to help people.

Vincent's legacy is a mixture of single-mindedness and openness. With his heart set on loving God and his neighbour, Vincent searched for creative methods to make that love active and credible so that he could ensure the "care of the whole person". Approaches that escaped other people caught his eye because he perceived their potential. He used his creative ability to gather, direct and encourage cooperation and mutual support in ministry.

One attitude that helped Vincent be so creative was his positive frame of mind which he showed when he said "If a thing could be looked at from a hundred angles, we should always look at it from the best."

Blessed Frederic Ozanam also continued this tradition of creativity. Frederic took the challenge he was given, drew others together and created a new group to serve the needs of people. He also inspired others to be creative and take up new challenges: I think that you have taken what was best worth taking amongst in seizing a charitable idea, which was latent in your own heart, no doubt, but had not yet found its outward expression. In a work like this, I think we should abandon ourselves much more to the inspiration of our heart than the calculations of our head. Providence sends us counsel and advice in the form of external circumstances, of thoughts and inspirations. I think that you will do better to follow this guidance freely, and not hamper yourself with rules and formulas.

He goes on to describe how this creativity allows for unity in diversity.

For, notwithstanding what I have just been saying of the difference which exists between our special aims, this should not diminish their union and harmony; on the contrary just as divergent rays tend to the same centre, so should our various efforts, tending to different points, resolve themselves into the same motive and proceed from the same principle. We must therefore be united so as to double our strength; we must hold frequent communication with each other, so that we may be stimulated and made proud and happy in common by the successes of each individually.

Vincent and Frederic give us a model of how to work both creatively and collaboratively.

**How do you use creativity in your work?
How do you handle the balance between individual
creative and working together as a team?**