

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP

"Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

(John 13:14-15)

Saturday, October 8, 2022

In the moments before his passion and death, Jesus sets before us the most profound example of servant leadership, to kneel at the feet of His disciples and wash their feet. Not only does Jesus wash the feet of those whom He loved, what is perhaps even more striking is that He knelt to wash the feet of those who would deny Him, abandon Him and even betray Him. Jesus served those whom He knew would hand Him over to be crucified.

Yet Jesus doesn't leave His heroic act of service as an ancient ritual. Jesus urges us, even today, with His challenge, "You should do as I have done for you." (John 13:15) This invitation to imitate Christ is the same one that inspired all those throughout history who have left an undeniable mark on humanity. St Teresa of Calcutta, St Francis of Assisi, St Vincent de Paul, Blessed Frederic Ozanam...

This same invitation is for us today, in our service with the St Vincent de Paul Society. We remain guided by the words of Frederic Ozanam, "Yours must be a work of love, of kindness, you must give your time, your talents, yourselves." Yet as Vincentians, this invitation to a work of love is more than walking with the poor. Our work of love is more than providing a hand up to those in need in our local areas. Our invitation is to a ministry of service in imitation of the greatest servant leader, Jesus. We are commissioned to give of our time, our talents, ourselves beyond and above the call of duty. Not only are we called to take up the towel, just like Jesus, and wash the feet of those who are in greatest need in our local community. We are also called to empower others to do the same. As servant leaders we are called to go the extra mile and wash the feet of those who disturb us, frustrate us and even disregard us, conscious that the example of Jesus is our benchmark.

I have set you an example that you should do  
as I have done for you...Jn 13:15

The St Vincent de Paul Society needs role models. The St Vincent de Paul Society needs leaders who are not afraid to witness to the life of Jesus, who urges us to a love without measure. The St Vincent de Paul Society needs a team of people who are united, not just in theory, but in sharing the same spirit that first motivated us to reach out and provide a hand up and not just a hand out.

Power, prestige and position have no place in the St Vincent de Paul Society. Instead, there is only room for compassion, understanding and passionate love for the poor.

We find ourselves in the midst of a world wracked by violence, a Church damaged by scandal and a Society in need of guidance to remain faithful to its mission. It is up to us. It is up to us here in this room today to provide an authentic example of radical and humble service, unafraid to go against the 'norm' and dream new dreams for how the original inspiration of Blessed Frederic Ozanam can be transformational into the future.

Perhaps the words of the Ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu can be a reminder for us in our ministry of servant leadership in the Society.

Go to the people. Live with them.  
Learn from them. Love them.  
Start with what they know.  
Build with what they have.  
But with the best leaders  
When the work is done  
The task accomplished  
The people will say  
'We have done it ourselves'



## Questions for Reflection

What inspires you about the servant leadership of Jesus?

How do you reflect servant leadership in your role with the St Vincent de Paul Society?

How do you concretely empower others in your role with the St Vincent de Paul Society?