



THE VALUE OF VULNERABILITY AND OPENNESS

When Jesus sent his disciples out into the world to minister to people, he wanted them to be vulnerable, that is, without purse, bag or sandals (Lk 10:4). It was a little like an immersion experience for them. By asking this Jesus encourages them to be vulnerable 'like lambs among wolves' but more so to be open to the other. After they came back Jesus encouraged the disciples to reflect and share their experiences. They had been successful in their ministry, and Jesus invited them to rejoice in their relationship with God. His wanting them to be as free of baggage as possible enabled them to accept others from different backgrounds and cultures. The openness that Jesus was asking for only came with much reflection and journeying together.

St Vincent journeyed with Jesus and his experiences of the needs of people changed him. Frederic Ozanam had his eyes opened by his encounters with the poor and likewise through shared reflection with his fellow Vincentians and Rosalie Rendu. Those whose example we follow allowed their view of the world and of themselves to be expanded by the encounters they had.

Robert Wicks, in his book, *Availability*, reminds us that there is a link between being available to others and being available to ourselves. He goes on to explain how this availability is not about simply spending time with the other, but the goal is 'to share the Lord with others while in turn looking for and enjoying his sometimes almost hidden presence as it is revealed in them.'⁽²⁾ Fr David Ranson describes the need for all ministry to be a ministry of hospitality, which enters into conversation with others and allows us to be changed by the other discovering that 'the Kingdom of God may already be present within them though they may not have been able to name it.'⁽³⁾ When our vulnerability is soft and open, it then becomes hospitality and when this happens, we are building community with others.

We as Vincentians are privileged to enter into the lives of others often when they are at their most vulnerable. May we be vulnerable enough to have our eyes open and may we take the time to recognise the presence of God among ourselves and those we serve.