

# THE ARTICLE VINCENT DE PAUL: A PRIEST OF CHARITY AT THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF VINCENT'S SENSE OF  
CHARITY AND JUSTICE



Vincent saw Christ in the poor

*Vincent turned the medal (CCD:XI:26) and in the light of faith contemplated the poor as icons of Jesus Christ, as images of the Lord who desired to become poor and who desired to reveal himself to us through the poor. The poor are in Christ and Christ is in the poor. The poor are the privileged place for the encounter with God and with Jesus Christ. In the sacrament of the poor Christ appeals to us and questions us. For Vincent, the path to God was through those who hunger and thirst for just and solidarity and through those who demand to be treated with dignity.*

Vincent also linked charity and justice.

Vincent de Paul was truly a revolutionary of charity who sowed the seeds of charity and justice. Thanks to the spirit that he passed on to his sons and daughters and to all those who were and are inspired by his charism, these seeds have produced much fruit in the Church.

Vincent's thinking with regard to the question of justice is summed up with the following words that are surprising for a man of the seventeenth century: *God will grant you the grace, Monsieur, of softening our hearts toward the wretched creatures and of realizing that in helping them we are doing an act of justice and not of mercy (CCD:VII:115). There is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice (CCD:II:68).*

Vincent became accustomed to confront poverty directly. He attempted to understand its causes and in this way he could provide the best solutions.

We can affirm that all of Vincent's ministry was a defense of life and a ministry that bestowed dignity upon the poor.