



Through the Glass

Vincentians know that it can be difficult at times for Companions to ask for help. With gentleness, we often reassure our neighbours in need that we are glad they have called us, and glad that we can help. We also know that material assistance is not the most important thing we can offer, and not the most important thing that anybody needs.

Suffering poverty goes much deeper than lack of food or shelter. Imagine ourselves in poverty, walking down the street, on our way to a job that might just cover our bills, but can't possibly cover anything more. As we go, we see many other people walking on the footpath going about their own business, none of them knowing what we are going through. Glancing through the glass as we pass a café, we see smiling faces drinking a hot steaming coffee that we know we can't afford, and we begin to feel that maybe we will never be able to afford to do this, that being able to buy a simple cup of coffee just isn't going to be something we could ever afford. But it isn't just the price tag - it is the growing feeling that the community that surrounds us, filled with its comforts and leisure, seemingly so out of reach, is a community that simply does not have space for us.

We must remember that everyone is created to live in community - all of us, and each of us. When material poverty leads one to believe they are not only deprived but forgotten, that is true poverty, poverty of the body and mind and of the heart and soul.

Vincentians seek out the poor not because they are difficult to find. They are right there, on the other side of the glass, seeing us with our coffee, and believing we don't see them. Yet in fact we do see and seek them and not because they need us, but because we need them. Our whole reason for service is that our Companions are important. We all have been promised by our Saviour that whatsoever we do to the least among us He will receive as if done for Himself. (1)

Be it in fact with a cup of hot coffee, or a warm blanket, food to sustain, assistance with bills, somewhere to sleep and a prayer of hope, we welcome the poor into community with us. We do not do this because we are seeking reward for ourselves, but we reach out because we see our Companions as, "the sacred images of that God whom we do not see". (2)

Therefore, from inside the warm café, we need only to look through the glass, and then we will be face-to-face with the one we have been seeking all along and we are able to reach out with love and hope.