

# TO LEAVE God for God

**“Never have I prayed so well...”**

It is easy to lose the person behind the amazing catalogue of Sister Rosalie Rendu’s accomplishments in the service of those who were poor. The inner person tends to disappear behind the person of action. Often, apostolic zeal clouds the examination of other equally important qualities and virtues, but looking deeper we find that grace of our Vincentian Charism is rooted in our call to become “Contemplatives in Action”, uniting prayer and action.

Every day, in all kinds of weather Sr Rosalie crisscrossed the streets and alleyways of the Mouffetard district. With her rosary in her hand and a heavy basket on her arm, she hurried her steps for she knew someone was waiting for her! Sr Rosalie walked with her God. She would speak to God of this family in distress as the father had no work, of this elderly person who was dying: “Never have I prayed so well as in the streets,” she would say.

## **Action and Contemplation**

For Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac and their followers, achieving the necessary balance between prayer, action and community was a constant challenge and struggle, because of the crushing needs of those they were called to serve. Yet attaining this balance was the essential quality of their spirituality and their vocation.

Vincent and Louise had learnt from experience just how difficult it is to keep one’s priorities straight. Vincent wrote to one of his confreres, “God demands first the heart, then the work.” Over and over, Vincent would tell the Daughters of Charity: “If it’s time for prayer and you hear poor persons calling for you, mortify yourselves and ‘leave God for God,’ even though you must do your utmost not to omit your prayer, for that’s what will keep you united to God.” And so Vincent with conviction would say, “If you go to the poor ten times a day, ten times a day you will find God there.”

## **The words of Sr Rosalie Rendu:**

“One night I dreamed that I stood at the judgement seat of God. God received me with great severity and was about to pronounce my sentences when, suddenly, I was surrounded by an immense crowd of people carrying old boots, shoes and hats. They presented all these things to God saying: ‘She was the one who gave us all these things.’ Then Jesus turned to me and said: ‘Because you gave all these second-hand clothes in my name, I open heaven to you. Enter for all eternity.’”

Choose an event from your service to those who are poor that, like Sr Rosalie, united action and contemplation. How did you find that you also:

- “never prayed as well as in the streets”?
- “left God for God”...finding him in the poor?