

Vincent could tell a good story

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J. Patrick Murphy, CM writes of Mr. Vincent that he had a feisty temper, was a good mimic, could tell a good story, and was charming to women. He proposes the following:

Lesson “Know your gifts, strengths and limits – then leverage them.”

On March 28, 1659, a year and a half before his death, he publicly and humbly professed in front of the community: *I lose my temper, I change, I complain, I find fault ... at other times I am very brusque with some [people] and speak loudly and harshly ... other, boorish persons like me, present themselves with a stern, gloomy or forbidding expression* (CCD:XII:154, 155, 156).

His gascon character was prone to exaggeration and yet his conversation was very appealing and that could be viewed as a sign that he was not as dry as he said he was. We know that he was able to combine seriousness with humor and the pleasant with the useful.

One has simply to read his conferences and letters to discover his humor. A distinct form of humor arose spontaneously from his peasant origins and from his relationship with the poor country people ... and this humor was often expressed in comic irony.

When a priest of the Congregation asked permission to leave the community in order to help his elderly father, Vincent responded: *this does not hold true of your father who is only forty or forty-five years of age at the most, enjoying good health, able to work and who is, in fact, working. Otherwise, he would not have remarried, as he has done recently, to a young woman eighteen years of age, who is one of the most beautiful girls in town. He himself informed me of this* (CCD:II:611).

Father Renaudin stated that *if charity had not been Vincent's great concern he could easily have been a satirist* (Saint Vincent de Paul, Marseille, 1929, p. 25).

It is amazing how he was able to trivialize situations and behavior that were not in accord with evangelical simplicity ... and yet he never resorted to sarcasm or sadism. He never wanted to harm a person but he would hold up for ridicule any vain or licentious behaviour.

Brother Ducournau, Vincent's secretary, pointed out that each individual is very attentive when he speaks, many are delighted to listen to him, and those who are absent often ask what he said, expressing their regret at not having been present for it (CCD:XI:xxix). It was truly a joy to be able to participate in one of those community events in which Vincent spoke in words that lifted the spirits of his listeners and that expressed his practical wisdom and his authority.

As for being charming with women... one need only look at the success of the the Confraternities of Charity and the Ladies of Charity, not to mention the Daughters of Charity.

Personal lessons

- **How well do we know ourselves ... our STRENGTHS as well as our weaknesses?**
- **Do we use our strengths well in the service of the least of our brothers and sisters.**
- **Can we admit when our weakness get in the way of serving others?**

Inspiration for the above comes from an article "[Happiness/Joy](#)" by Antonino Orcajo, CM.

