



PRAYERS AND SONGS

St. Vincent de Paul Georgia

OPENING PRAYER
PERSUASION
As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

If the mission really matters, the only leader worth following is a strong leader. Vincentian servant leaders rely on persuasion rather than on one's positional authority. Persuasion, listening and awareness support the servant leader in the decision making processes, and helps them to build consensus within groups. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- Lord a strong leader is the only kind of leader I want to follow, especially with a mission as important as ours. And it is the kind of leader I want to be. I don't want to be the boss; I want to be the leader.
- I am not asking for the power to make people do what I want. I need some sort of authority, but I don't care if you give me formal, positional authority or informal, personal authority. I simply want to be the person who exercises decisive influence on the values and directions of the whole group, the one who holds them together and keeps them healthy and on task.
- A weak leader is not really a leader at all, Lord. If you want me to lead, I have to be strong, and you will have to do it. I know you can. Nothing is impossible for you. So I am saying to you plainly that if you grant a miracle of your strength in me and a miracle of your protection on my efforts, then I can be the strong leader we need. Otherwise I cannot be the leader at all because we do not need a weak leader.
- We need a leader with great influence, someone almost everyone trusts, someone who can enable us to get the job done. Only your strength can do this in me, and only your grace can move them to accept me as the leader.

Together:

I am willing to lead with your strength, Lord. I have learned to follow well, so people can trust me to lead with a follower's heart. When I step out in leadership actions, either I will be persuasive and effective or I won't. If your strength can flow through me and make others feel strong when I lead, then you will have shown us again that...Your strength makes everything possible, God. Make me a strong leader. Amen

CLOSING PRAYER
CONCEPTUALIZATION
As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

Effective leaders encourage creativity by modeling it personally and by protecting and rewarding it in others. Vincentian servant- leaders seek to nurture their ability to inspire Councils and Conferences to *dream great dreams*. The ability to look at a problem or an opportunity from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- I have trapped myself in a box that I can't even recognize, Lord. You are the one who sets prisoners free. Release me. I am ready to leave the box of my normal thinking, willing to destroy it in the process, if that is what it takes. I must find the opportunity that lies disguised in this challenge. Show me the truth that will set me free.

- I am a prisoner of my old ways of thinking. My assumptions blind me to new possibilities that you have for me. What I think I know keeps me from knowing what I cannot yet think. I see people's weaknesses; you see the strengths you gave them. I see what they have done so far; you see what they could do. I see why we can't do it; you see how we can.

- I see the problem; you see the solution. Break me out. Do you need to move me to a new place for a different view? Am I protecting something or someone? Am I protecting myself? What am I afraid of in this situation? Have I surrounded myself with people who think too much alike? Too much like me?

- You created this universe from nothing, lacing all of its expanding and self-renewing intricacies together in absolute perfection. You are the Father of all creativity. I want to be creative like you, Father. I want to think new thoughts and bring them into existence. I love to create solutions for the messes people get into.

Together:

Give me the creative freedom of your Spirit. Give me a new song to sing, a new story to write. I tried to be creative, and I worked myself into this dungeon. Send your Spirit of freedom and break me out. Amen

Beatitudes of a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

O God, give us the blessing and grace to be Vincentian Servant Leader, and so we pray:

Alternate:

Blessed are the leaders who have not sought the high places, but who have been drafted into service because of their ability and willingness to serve.

Blessed are the leaders who know where they are going, why they are going, and how to get there.

Blessed are the leaders who know no discouragement, who present no alibi.

Blessed are the leaders who know how to lead without being dictatorial, because true leaders are humble.

Blessed are the leaders who seek the best for those they serve.

Blessed are the leaders who develop new leaders.

Blessed are the leaders who march with the group, interpreting correctly the signs on the pathway that leads to success.

Blessed are the leaders who have their head in the clouds but their feet on the ground.

Blessed are the leaders who consider leadership an opportunity for service.

For this we pray. Amen

SONG OF RENEWAL

*Renew us O Lord in Your love.
Make us the instruments of Your Holy Will.
Then set our hearts on Fire; may our lives inspire.
All will know we're renewed in Your love.*

Help us to grow in holiness.
Bring us ever closer to Your Way.
To see you more clearly, love you more dearly,
Follow you more nearly everyday.

*Renew us O Lord in Your love.
Make us the instruments of Your Holy Will.
Then set our hearts on Fire; may our lives inspire.
All will know we're renewed in Your love.*

Help us to build community.
Guide us in our Society
To embrace all in friendship, a true faith family
And to form a lasting solidarity.

*Renew us O Lord in Your love.
Make us the instruments of Your Holy Will.
Then set our hearts on Fire; may our lives inspire.
All will know we're renewed in Your love.*

Help us to serve all those in need;
To see the face of Christ in everyone.
Let us love with compassion and follow the lead
Of Jesus Christ, the Father's only Son.

*Renew us O Lord in Your love.
Make us the instruments of Your Holy Will.
Then set our hearts on Fire; may our lives inspire.
All will know we're renewed in Your love.*

Leader: I now invite the alumni to share with those at your table your experience at the Invitation for Renewal, and to encourage them to attend.

CLOSING PRAYER
FORESIGHT
As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

Vincentian foresight is a characteristic cultivated through prayer and study that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from our rich heritage, applied to the present and the future. Unless we are sure of our starting point, we can never chart a correct course to our goal. There is no alternative to the freedom and power of the truth. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- O God, help us to agree on what is true about who we are and where we are, so that we may agree on where to go and the best way to get there. Though we will not all look at our reality in the same way, help us to see the same reality and agree on its meaning for us, whether or not we like what we see. Otherwise, God, we will waste precious time and energy arguing from different assumptions.
- Obviously, God, you love variety! You made us so diverse that all we can do is laugh and wonder. That in itself is part of the reality we must understand. We each have our own reactions and feelings about everything. This wonderful range of perspectives helps us to excel, as long as you help us to respect each other.
- On my own it is not at all clear to me what is true, God. I wish I could explain it all logically or factually for everyone. This one I just know somehow, without all the normal rational processes. With foresight, I see the beginning and the end without the middle. I feel in my gut, and I think it is right, but the part of me that loves data and logic always complains. So will all the logical people around me, God, and who can blame them?
- Somehow, God, in all our differences, and despite all the erratic information, give us a shared reality, a similar idea of how things truly are for us. Lead my spirit to the truth about our situation, so that I can describe it in a way that leads to consensus.
- Some of us cannot see the truth because we fear it. Some of us invested heavily in another view of reality, and we may feel shamed if it turns out we were wrong. Some of us actually worked to build a different reality and do not want it to change.

Together:

I know that the truth tends to win in the long run, but I need to see it early enough to act wisely. Help us to understand our situation accurately so that we do not waste this opportunity for greatness. We want the truth because only the truth can free us to achieve our mission. Show us what is real, God. We need to know the truth. Amen

OPENING PRAYER
BUILDING COMMUNITY
As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

Servant leadership in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is focused on building and sustaining a community of individuals formed in a Mission and Rule. Values control behavior. We act on the basis of what we believe really matters, what is right and good. Whoever influences the Core Values in a group is, in fact, the leader. The process must begin with the values God instills in the leader, and so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- I realize I cannot control everything, God, even through endless rules, regulations, and directives. I do not want an immobilized democracy in which everyone votes on every little thing. Nor do I want a demoralized dictatorship where I have to decide everything and think up everything. I want a true community with strong relationships and effective actions guided by commitment to our mission.
- Our Core Values make us a faith community in which achieving our mission is our means of becoming better people and a better organization. These values move us toward the right goals. If we do not live our core values, nothing else will work right.
- Your call to leadership always includes your provision of what I need to lead. By your grace I can do a lot of things to keep the Core Values before us and to model them myself, but only your Spirit can plant them deep and strong in everyone's heart. Make me a spiritual leader, a connection in the dynamic relationship of your Spirit and the spirit of the members.
- I know the odds are against this working. It feels safer to try to tell everyone what to do instead of trusting them to act on their own in concert with our core values. But help me to respect them as individuals you created them to be so they can grow and be truly great for your glory.
- I want to be a spiritually sensitive leader, to enable people to sense more clearly and powerfully the call and guidance of your Spirit in their lives. I know this kind of leadership is rare because it is a matter of the spirit, but, God, that is the kind of leader I want to be.

Together:

As the leader, I am responsible for the mission and values we all live by. It must begin within me. Give me a healthy and strong spirit, for there is no going back. I feel a deep longing for the future. Help us to live the Core Values that will take us there. I want it, God; I ache for it—*for* how things *could* be. Infuse the Core Values in our hearts, God. Start with me. Amen

CLOSING PRAYER
AWARENESS
As a Vincentian Servant Leader

Leader:

Awareness, and especially self-awareness supported by prayer and reflection, strengthens the Vincentian servant-leader to be able to view most situations from a more spiritually grounded and integrated, holistic position. And so we pray:

Alternate sides:

- When I am following you, God, I feel a bit lost most of the time. But that makes sense. I am not leading you. You are leading me.
- If I want complete certainty, I cannot expect to be led by your Spirit. I cannot know what will happen next, nor demand control. And I know that following you is the only way I can make a great and beautiful difference in the world.
- I cannot control what happens outside, but by your grace I can increasingly know myself. Help me to master who I am and how I give meaning to actions and events around me. I know when I am listening to you because your Spirit makes me aware, encourages me, points to the truth, lets me decide, and holds me accountable.
- Somehow, God, you always make it work out. You provide the necessary resources: wisdom, strength, time, helpers, money, skills, and all the unanticipated things that I never could have planned for anyway. More wonderfully, you redeem my mistakes.
- I have done all the analyzing, conferring, thinking, planning, double-checking, and praying that I have time for. There is never enough information, and there are always conflicting opinions and priorities. I cannot sort it all out, but this is what seems best.

Together:

Give me your grace of awareness, so that I can understand issues involving ethics, values and the tensions within the Society. Is there anything else you want to tell me? It is time to act. I hope this is right for everyone involved. Now it is all up to you. I am not sure what to do, God, but here I go. Please make it all work out right. Amen

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we ask for the grace to live more deeply as lay members of the Vincentian Family. In our daily life, give us the wisdom to follow the Rule so that we can love you with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Alternate sides:

- A Rule is the fruit of experience. It distills the wisdom of those who have gone before us. It is not an abstract document, spinning out a theory about how to live well. Rather it maps out a path to holiness that many have trod. It aims to teach a well-tested way of loving.
- The goal of the Rule is to create an environment where we can express what is best within us. The Rule is a spiritual way; it is more wisdom than law. We remember the countless lay men and women who have walked before us in the way of the Lord.
- We have known saints—some canonized, most not—people whose lives radiated holiness because the love of God and the love of others, especially the poor, pulsed within them.
- The Rule is meant to set us free to love. The Rule says: "Turn Everything to Love." It wants to create a free and open space in our life where the loving presence of God will touch us with the fundamental mystery of Christianity which is not so much that we love God but that God first loves us.

Reader:

First: The Rule aims to hollow out a sacred place within us. Over its door is engraved the title: "Given to God in Baptism." It is a space not so much to love God as to be loved by God.

Second: The Rule wants to create a sacred place in our lives where the title reads: "In the Service of Others, especially the Poor." It urges us to discipline our heart, our mind, and our use of time and energy, so that we can walk with Jesus as a servant of others, focusing on the neediest among us. It is only in accepting God's love that we can truly love others, and so the Rule recalls again and again that the union of prayer and action is the key to genuine holiness.

Third: The Rule seeks to create a sacred space where the title reads: "A Graced Human community." It is a sacred space where we encounter God as we gather together in our Conference, as we listen to our suffering brothers and sisters supporting them in daily prayer and for walking with them through life, and in the sacred space as we come together around the Eucharistic table.

And so we pray:

Together:

Lord, as we reflect and meditate on the Vincentian Rule for Lay Members, give us the grace to reflect on the lives of the wonderful people who have walked before us in our family: Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Rosalie Rendu, Frederic Ozanam, Elizabeth Seton, and all the holy Vincentians who have gone before us seeking to follow Christ faithfully.

Leader:

Indeed, we are standing on the shoulders of Giants...and so let us pray as we sing "Standing on the Shoulders":

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS

I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me
I am stronger for their courage; I am wiser for their words
I am lifted by their longing for a fair and brighter future
I am grateful for their vision, for their toiling on this earth

We are standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us
They are saints and they are humans, they are angels, they are friends
We can see beyond the struggles and the troubles and the challenge
When we know that by our efforts things will be better in the end

They lift me higher than I could ever fly
Carrying my burdens away
I imagine our world if they hadn't tried
We wouldn't be here celebrating today

I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me
I am honored by their passion for our ministry
I will stand a little taller; I will work a little longer
And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me

They lift me higher than I could ever fly
Carrying my burdens away
I imagine our world if they hadn't tried
We wouldn't be so very blessed today

I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me
I am honored by their passion for our ministry
I will stand a little taller; I will work a little longer
And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me

By Joyce Johnson Rouse

THE EXAMEN

The Ignatian tradition includes a very effective tool for helping us identify our feelings and the spiritual struggle behind them: the Examen." This practice is a way of paying attention to our spiritual experience so that we can be aware of God's action behind them. The Examen has taken many forms over the centuries. This five point approach developed by Dennis Hamm, SJ, of Creighton University is very effective.

1. BEGIN BY PRAYING FOR LIGHT

Humbly ask God for the grace to see clearly. We want to get past our own thinking and desire, and to see with God's eyes.

2. PRAY IN THANKSGIVING

If you have had a hard day it can be difficult to focus on the reason we are grateful to God. This step is important because it puts our problems in perspective. It is easy for us to exaggerate the difficulties in our lives and to focus on the negative. Be honest. Mention what you are truly grateful for, not what you think you *should* be grateful for. Find the true interior places where true thanksgiving resides.

3. REVIEW THE EMOTIONS OF THE DAY

Our day is filled with events and encounters and thoughts that trigger emotions. Reflect on these feelings. The feelings are more important for discernment than the events that caused them. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in these reflections. Nothing is so small that it is insignificant. Someone's thoughtless remark can cut more deeply and stay with us longer than an outright attack. Look at both positive and negative emotions: joy, happiness, laughter, love and sorrow, anger, jealousy and sadness.

4. CHOOSE ONE OF THESE EMOTIONS AND PRAY FROM IT

Choose one of these feelings and probe it deeply. Experience it. Pray from it. Praying from your emotions means allowing the emotion to become our input in a conversation with God. For example, "God, I feel very lonely today," or even, "God, I am really angry today and in fact, I think I am made at you." After you have said what you wanted to say be quiet and listen to God's response.

5. LOOK FORWARD TO TOMORROW

What are the lessons you learned to better help you to face tomorrow? This is about fanning the flame of faith so that we can believe that God's help will come to us each and every day. This is the assurance that God offers Paul: "*My grace is sufficient for you*" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader:

As we close our Retreat, let us pray for the grace of being faithful to our Vincentian Vocation, as we sing:

Find us Faithful

We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us line the way
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace.

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us,
Let us leave to those behind us the heritage of faithfulness
Passed on through Godly lives.

May all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
May all who come behind us find us faithful.

After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone
And our children sift through all we've left behind
May the clues that they discover and the memories they uncover
Become the light that leads them to the road we each must find.

May all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
May all who come behind us find us faithful.

By Steve Green

Announcement: New formation resource "Love, Charity and Justice" (5 set DVD).