Vincentian Home Visitation

Preface

From our Society's beginning, the central and most basic activity of Conferences has been the visitation of the needy in their homes. This is the clearest symbol of our Vincentian charism, which dictates the highest respect for the dignity of the poor. It symbolizes our Vincentian commitment to reach out to the needy, rather than require them to report to an outside service site. In the home, needy persons feel most free to confide their stories of struggle. In that family setting, Vincentians are asked to listen, offer humble advice, and render assistance.

Vincentians always visit in pairs. This practice emphasizes the Conference's status as a community and not a collection of individuals who "do their own thing." From the beginning, Vincentian visitation to the needy was done in pairs for the protection of both the needy person and the members. This precedent was set by Christ Himself, when He sent out the Apostles two by two (MK 6:7). The Society wisely continues this tradition in the interest of safety, liability and propriety.

Rules for Home Visits

1. **One of our purposes as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to bring the love of God to those who are in need.**
   Our role as helper obliges us to keep as open a mind as possible. Give those we serve the benefit of the doubt – at least until you have heard their story and can make a reasonable judgment as to the validity of the need. And remember it is the need we are judging – not the person.

2. **Vincentians must be good listeners.**
   We must listen carefully to the poor. We should visit those in need with the spirit of servants asking their masters, "What is it that we can do for you?" Our Lord has called out to us. It is He whom we are serving in the person of the poor.

3. **We are representing Christ to those we serve.**
   We must be pleasant, loving, and caring when we encounter those in need. Our Lord asks us to love one another as He loves us. That's a tall order and we need to represent Him well. What this means is that if you are having a bad day, you can't show it. As Vincentians we represent Christ to those we serve.

4. **Vincentians show those who are in need that God cares about them, and gives them some hope.**
   Christ's love was unconditional. You may walk away from a visit feeling like you have made a real difference or you may feel like you were not able to change anything. The impact of what you do today may not show up for months or years.

5. **Vincentians are asked to make a decision, a choice and a judgment.**
   We are asked to make good judgments about whether to help or not. We are not to be judgmental about lifestyle choices. It is not easy. We have to deal with mind and heart issues as well as all our life experiences. Don't deny someone your help because you disagree with how they choose to live. Remember that our Lord told us that whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters we do to him.

6. **Judgment not Judgmental.**
   We are asked to make a judgment about the need that is presented to us. We must not be judgmental about the actions of the people requesting assistance. Remember: "The measure with which you measure will be used to measure you.' (Matthew 7:2)

7. **The Conference Regulations.**
   It is the Conference that has the resources. It is the Conference that does the works of charity. It is the Conference that decides what will and what will not be done. If the Conference as a group decides not to give any further assistance to a specific family (regardless of reason), it would be wrong for an individual member or visiting team to assist the family in spite of the Conferences decision.

8. **Vincentians bolster, encourage, and assist each other.**
   The visiting team members are the only ones present to hear the story, to ask the questions, to understand the circumstances and to formulate a resolution to the problem. Their decision, at that time is the right one.
   The preceding information has been obtained from the following sources: (SVDP Rule), (SVDP Manual) and (Serving in Hope, Module 6).