

Homily of the Superior General for Closing Meeting of the Visitors

Readings: James 5:9-12; Matthew 5:33-37

We all need a guiding star in life. As St. Vincent grew older, more and more that star became simplicity. “It is the virtue I love most,” he stated. “It is my gospel.” Simplicity is love of the truth, even passion for it. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” Jesus says. “No one comes to the Father except through me” — through the Truth. “Those who act in the truth, walk in the light,” Jesus declares. “The truth will see you free,” he assures his followers.

So I encourage you today, in the footsteps of St. Vincent, make truth your guiding star as Visitors.

The saying of Jesus in today's first reading appears in three different places in the New Testament (Jas 5:12; Mt 5:37; 2 Cor 1:18-19), so it must have been very important for the early Christian community. Jesus states: “Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no.”

As we conclude this meeting, let me reflect with you for a few moments on this wonderful saying of the Lord. What is its meaning for us, who exercise the service of authority in the Congregation?

1. Jesus is saying to us first of all, “Speak clearly and simply.” Do so humbly and with great charity, but speak the truth. Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no. I encourage you to do this as Visitors. Speak simply with your brothers in community, with the poor, with your own spiritual director. My experience is that at times many of us are afraid to express our own truth. We hesitate to talk about our sexuality and celibacy, our struggles, our hopes, our fears, our dreams, our weaknesses. Jesus calls us today to speak clearly and simply. I know, of course, that that is difficult, but it is one of the great challenges that faces those in authority today. Can we create a communal environment, an ecosystem in which we consistently speak the truth with love?
2. Jesus is also encouraging us to witness to the truth. He is saying: “Let your life match your words.” “Let your Vincentian charism shine out through your life.” “Let the truth set you free.” I encourage you today to call the confreres to witness to the truth that is at the heart of our missionary vocation as Vincentians.
 - Call them to go wherever in the world the needs of the poor are crying out, rather than hold on tightly to the security of a place or a job that they like or even the friends or people who appreciate them so much.
 - Call them to live with one another in community as friends who really love each other.

- Call them to share their own material possessions with the poor and to stand with them in their struggle for justice.
- Call them to witness to forms of love that are more lasting than sexual union, rather than to focus on sexual relations as if they were the only way of loving.
- Call them to discern the will of God with their brothers, to listen well, rather than to dominate or claim a personal monopoly in knowing God's will.
- Call them to renounce immediate gratification for the sake of more important communal goals, rather than seek solely what is pleasing in the here and now.
- Call them to spend time genuinely in prayer rather than to feel they must always be "doing something."

In other words, call them to be authentic. Let our words and our life be one as Vincentians.

3. Jesus encourages us, finally, to practice the truth. He says to us: "Do the works of justice and of love." In the context of Matthew's gospel, what "practicing the truth" means is clear. It means living in solidarity with the poor, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, searching for the causes of their poverty and trying to eradicate them through educational programs, health care programs, human development programs. It means sharing God's word with them and celebrating his Eucharistic presence. And today, when there is so much violence, it means being a peacemaker and teaching others to be peacemakers too. "Do the works of justice and peace," Jesus says to us. Let the works of justice and charity shine out in your province.

So, my brothers, the Lord lays out before us today this challenging saying: "Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no." Speak the truth. Witness to it. Practice it. Live it in community. If the truth shines out from our local communities, then our words will be good news, our lives will be good news, our works will be good news. How I want to encourage you in this today! Animate our local communities to love the truth deeply, to live it authentically, and to make it real in works. Then our communities will be a sign in the world that Jesus is really alive among us.

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
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