

## "Be Not Afraid" - Winter 2023

*"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God..." Luke 1:28-30*

As a young girl hearing this message from the angel, Mary was troubled and afraid. Yet, she answered positively to God's call to service and trusted in His will. We can assume that most of us have not been visited by an angel in this dramatic way but God still calls us to service in other ways. How do we respond?

More than 300 people across the Diocese of Richmond and more than 100,000 across the United States have answered God's call to strengthen their faith lives through service to those most in need by becoming members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. These Vincentians perform home visits to help those struggling financially, spiritually and in other ways. These Vincentians work at our food pantries to provide this basic necessity to those we serve. Vincentians may volunteer at our thrift store to help raise funds and provide housewares to people in need. Our Vincentians may deliver furniture and mattresses across the Diocese of Richmond for families who go without. Yet there are so many people that we cannot serve because we need more people to answer the call to service. We need people to consider either joining existing St Vincent de Paul Conferences or start new ones. The Society of St Vincent de Paul teaches you everything you need to know and will provide an experience unlike any other.

*In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the City Of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:8-11*

Again, there is the phrase "Do not be afraid." This or a version of this is the most common phrase found in the Bible. Whether it was Mary, the teenager who would be the mother of God or lowly shepherds in a field, God shared the same message. He shares this message with us today. Whether as Vincentians serving those in need or to

those struggling in poverty, God reminds us that He has a loving plan for us and we just need to trust in Him and follow-but we often make that challenging.

Maybe we fear that we don't have the time to participate in a ministry. Maybe we fear that it's just too overwhelming to take on poverty. Like Mary, we need to accept God's call and happily serve Him regardless of the commitment required.

For those struggling in poverty, their fears are more centered on how to provide food tomorrow and what will happen if the car breaks down because they cannot afford to fix it. Like the shepherds, it is hard for them to accept that God would come to them and be there for them.

Yet for the unsure volunteer and the person living in poverty, God says, "Be not afraid." I am here for you. As Vincentians, we look to not only bring Jesus to our friends in need but we are called to see the face of Jesus in those we serve.

So this Christmas season, put aside any fears or concerns you may have and consider getting engaged with Society of St Vincent de Paul. May your heart be open to God's call to service and to help those in need.

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Dan Kearns

Executive Director

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul-Richmond