

# Spiritual Reflections for the month of February 2025

Please choose a reflection and mediation

## *Reflection arising from GTCC Spirituality Sessions of 2024*

Our SSVP mission is to live the Gospel by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, and joy. During our Winter 2024 Spirituality Sessions, the question was asked: are we really serving the poor by visiting Neighbours in Need who are housed and receiving social assistance, while many people in the Greater Toronto Area are homeless?

Pope Francis suggests that even in the world of the more fortunate, the social tragedy of families rapidly slipping into poverty remains largely hidden. He reminds us that Jesus in his encounter with curious disciples invited them to ‘come and see’ where he lived (Jn 1:39). Pope Francis uses this example to encourage us to move beyond the complacent attitude that we “already know” and be willing to spend time with people, to listen to their stories and to confront realities in our own neighbourhoods, which always in some way surprises us.<sup>1</sup>

Blessed Frederic Ozanam, writes of his surprise and his change of heart in visiting people living in the Parisian tenements of his day. Meeting face to face those living in poverty dispelled many false notions and stereotypes that he harboured about the poor.<sup>2</sup>

### **Reflection questions**

Home visits are a voyage of discovery. By them, we uncover hidden pockets of poverty in our neighbourhoods. We come to see how people, mostly dependant on the public purse, get by.

1. Are there memorable situations where you have been surprised by the welcome, warmth or dignity of a Neighbour in Need?
2. Are there examples of prejudices or false stereotypes in your own heart that you have had to confront?

*Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves,  
and to set out in search of truth.  
Teach us to go out and see,  
teach us to listen,  
not to entertain prejudices  
or draw hasty conclusions.  
Teach us to go where no one else will go,  
to take the time needed to understand,  
to pay attention to the essentials,  
not to be distracted by the superfluous,  
to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.  
Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world  
and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.*

*Sr. Yvonne Gray, Spirituality Committee Chair  
and St. Anselm's Conference, Toronto East PC.*

## Spiritual Reflection

adapted from Fratelli Tutti, Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 2020, Pope Francis

***“I was a stranger and you welcomed me”*** (Mt 25:35).

*Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love and “thereby confers infinite dignity” upon all humanity. (Fratelli tutti #85)*

*Still, there are those who appear to feel encouraged or at least permitted by their faith to support varieties of narrow and violent nationalism, xenophobia and contempt, and even the mistreatment of those who are different.*

*Faith, and the humanism it inspires, must maintain a critical sense in the face of these tendencies, and prompt an immediate response whenever they rear their head. For this reason, it is important that catechesis and preaching speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person, and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters. (Ft.#86)*

“To bear with patience wrongs done to oneself is a mark of perfection, but to bear with patience wrongs done to someone else is a mark of imperfection and even of actual sin”.

~ Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

### Reflection Questions

As Vincentians, we are constantly in ‘social friendship’ with people who have been marginalised and held in contempt by our society. As members of a parish community can we do more to share our experiences and our joy in following ‘*our Christian calling to seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived*’?

1. Do we talk about, or could we do a better job of sharing stories of challenges, hardship, fear of eviction, lack of jobs for youth etc. with fellow parishioners?
2. Can we dignify Neighbours in Need, where appropriate, by welcoming them fully into our parish communities?

*Sr. Yvonne Gray, Spirituality Committee Chair  
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