



Out of Justice or Charity? The Fulfillment of the Vow to Serve the Poor in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in the Case of Servant of God Sister Barbara Samulowska, D.C.

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Abstract: The author of the study reveals the nature and thus the richness of the vows lived out in the Company of the Daughters of Charity. Their specificity comes from the fact that these vows are non-religious, annual, and renewable. Furthermore, they are rooted in the mystery of Christ and the Church. An essential element of the promises made to God by the Daughters of Charity is that these promises are lived by in the light of the vow to serve the poor. The other vows are understood and lived by the sisters in relation to this very vow. Saint Vincent de Paul was convinced that serving the poor was doing justice. In turn, this had to be associated with charity. An example of living by the vow to serve the poor is Sr. Barbara Stanisława Samulowska, D.C. Her just service intertwined with mercy came not so much from the privilege of Marian revelations, which she experienced at Gietrzwałd, but rather from the fulfillment of the charism and aim of the congregation to which she belonged.

Keywords: Barbara Stanisława Samulowska, baptism, justice, vow to serve the poor, Company of the Daughters of Charity

Through making their choice to live based on the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience, the Daughters of Charity devote themselves to God in order to serve Christ in the poor. It formally began on March 25, 1642, when, accompanied by four other sisters, Louise de Marillac, co-founder of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, pronounced the vows for the first time, “for life.” Gradually, other sisters also made such vows. In 1648, the vows became annual, both the first vows and the renewed ones. As time went by, it became common for sisters to make their vows for the first time between the fifth and seventh year of vocation. Since 1801, this condition has been a requirement to continue in the Company (cf. Calvet 1961; Mezzadri and Nuovo 1991).

This study aims to present the specificity and richness of the vows made in the Company of the Daughters of Charity. To achieve this, it was essential to draw upon the key writings and teachings of St. Vincent de Paul concerning the unique nature of these vows—with particular emphasis on the first vow, namely, the vow of service to the poor. It marks the identity and objective, which the Company fulfills in the Church. Having the above vow in perspective, the author strives to give a response

to the following questions: Does serving the poor involve doing justice or charity? and How did Sr. Barbara Stanisława Samulowska, D.C., a visionary from the village of Gietrzwałd, missionary and Servant of God,¹ manage these two elements, resulting in the accomplishment of the vow of serving the poor?

1. A Unique Form of Commitment

The Company of the Daughters of Charity is a society of apostolic life in which religious vows are not made in the meaning specific to convents and congregations. However, the Daughters of Charity do undertake the living out of the evangelical counsels through the bonds formulated in the Constitutions (cf. CCL 731). They may not be religious vows, yet they constitute commitments—*aliquo vinculo*—defined by the internal laws of the Daughters of Charity (cf. Wroceński 2006, 185–207). The Constitutions determine these commitments as “non-religious, annual and always renewable.” (C 28a)

What makes these vows non-religious is that they differ from the ones made in convents. This mainly refers to the fact that the profession of the evangelical counsels in religious life is made through public vows and in this manner men and women religious are confirmed, whereas one becomes a Daughter of Charity through the total gift of self to God which is done through the service (to Him) in the poor from the very moment of entering the Seminary (cf. C 5a). The vows are made for the first time between five and seven years of vocation, and they are to confirm the total commitment to God, as well as serving the poor in a more profound dimension (cf. C 28c).

Being non-religious (not belonging to a religious institution), the Daughters of Charity do not profess their vows. Their Constitutions use such words as “choose,” “commit,” or “ratify.” (C 8b, 27, 28a) As far as the specificity of their service is concerned, it ought to be as follows:

They shall bear in mind that they do not belong to a Religious Order because that state is incompatible with the duties of their vocation. Nevertheless, since they are more exposed to

¹ Barbara Samulowska was born on January 21, 1865, in the village of Woryty. As a young girl, she experienced the grace of meeting the Virgin Mary from June 28 to September 16, 1877 (the Apparitions in Gietrzwałd are the only Polish Marian apparitions approved by the Church). They led Barbara to the decision to give herself to God and to serve the poor in the Company of the Daughters of Charity, where she took on the name of Stanisława. Sister Stanisława spent most of her life serving the sick in Guatemala. She died on December 6, 1950, in an aura of sanctity at the age of 85, after 66 years of her vocation and 55 years of her missionary work. On February 2, 2005, the process of beatification of Sr. Barbara Samulowska officially began. On May 31, 2023, a *positio* was submitted, and on December 1, 2023, the diocesan tribunal took an oath on the matter of validating the miraculous healing attributed to Servant of God Sr. Barbara Stanisława Samulowska (cf. Pranga 2024, 4–6).

the occasions of sin than nuns bound to the cloister, having for monastery only the houses of the sick and the place where the Superioress resides; for cell, a hired room; for chapel, the parish church; for cloister, the streets of the city; for enclosure, obedience, with an obligation to go nowhere but to the houses of the sick or to places necessary for their service; for grille, the fear of God; for veil, holy modesty; making no other profession to ensure their vocation and that, by their constant trust in Divine Providence and the offering they make to God of all that they are and of their service in the person of the poor. (Vincent de Paul 2006, 530)

In the beginning, the founders pondered whether the Daughters of Charity should make vows. They feared that the Daughters of Charity would be perceived as religious once they had professed vows and, in consequence, be forced into cloistered life, subsequently losing the possibility of moving freely, which was important for their visiting the poor who needed it. However, after the time of reflection, the founders decided to introduce the vows. Saint Vincent strove to make the Daughters of Charity aware that they would not become a religious order through the mentioned vows. "If he asks you, 'Do you make religious vows?' tell him, 'Oh no, Monsieur! We give ourselves to God to live in poverty, chastity, and obedience.'" (Vincent de Paul 2004, 432)

The vows of the Daughters of Charity are neither public, solemn, nor entirely private, but constitute a distinctive feature of the Company (cf. *IVDC* 1991). At the center of religious consecration is profession, whereas in the consecration of the Daughters of Charity, it is ministering to the poor that stands out as the central point (cf. Martínez 1991).

The vows are temporary and annual. Each year, the Daughters of Charity renew them on the Feast of the Annunciation. Through the renovation of vows, they reaffirm their original choice of vocation, made at the time of entering the Company, through which they gave themselves to God in the service of Christ in the poor (cf. *IVDC* 1991, 36–37).

The importance of the act of renovation also derives from the fact that it is never the same. Since the last vows, each sister has gained new experience, which has added shape to her unique history of vocation. Therefore, the annual renewal in the Company of the Daughters of Charity is never a copy of the previous one, for it always means "a new phase of deepening their total gift to God in the service of the poor." (*IVDC* 1991, 38)

The founders emphasized that temporality as such should not interfere with the option of fundamental choice. They agreed to the vows made in the Company as a sign of maturity and stability of vocation, since fidelity to vocation assumes persistence, which was pointed out by St. Vincent, "Our first reason for giving ourselves wholeheartedly to God to be faithful to Him, is that you've given yourselves to Him in the Company, with the intention of living and dying in it." (Vincent

de Paul 2004, 495) This is also confirmed by St. Louise, “We only accept those who have aspirations to live and die in the Company.” (Louise de Marillac 1987, 595)²

The temporality of the vows does not mean making short-term commitments, but it should truly be a symptom of spiritual dynamism and a help in the gradual deepening of vocation. From the very start, vows are made for life. The annual renovation confirms the first choice, which has become stable and invariable. The fact that vows are made for one year at a given time does not mean that the positive response to the previously made choice of life would only be valid for 12 months, as was clearly expressed by St. Vincent: “Still, it would be better not to make them at all than to have the intention of obtaining a dispensation whenever you wished.” (Vincent de Paul 2004, 22)

When the founders agreed on the decision to introduce vows in the Company, they did it knowing what their significance in the Church was—a commitment to follow Christ radically, stating:

And it would be well for those to whom God has granted the grace of giving themselves more perfectly to Him and who have promised to serve Him in the Company, to renew their vows. (Vincent de Paul 2004, 277–78)

By entering the Company, you chose Our Lord as your Spouse, and He received you as His spouses or, to put it better, you were engaged to Him and, at the end of four years, more or less, you gave yourselves entirely to Him by the vows, so you are His spouses and He is yours. (Vincent de Paul 2006, 138)

Each of you was inscribed in the book of charity when you gave yourselves to God to serve the poor, Sisters; and, on the day you took your vows. (Vincent de Paul 2006, 379)

The above statements show clearly that the evangelical radicalism of the vows of the Daughters of Charity is not in any degree diminished by the fact that they are “non-religious, annual and always renewable.”

2. The Vows Rooted in the Mystery of Christ and the Church

When St. Vincent debated with the Daughters of Charity on the topic of persevering in their vocation, he first and foremost invited them to be faithful to the Sacrament of Baptism and all that it contained. He used the following words:

If you're really faithful in the observance of this way of life, Sisters, you'll all be good Christians. I wouldn't be saying as much if I told you that you'd be good nuns. Why do people

² All translations have been prepared by the author.

join Religious Orders if not to become good Christian men and women? Yes, Sisters, really make it a point to become good Christian women by the faithful practice of your Rules. God will be glorified by it, and your Company will edify the whole Church. (Vincent de Paul 2004, 103)

Becoming a good Christian involves discovering the grace of baptism. It is there that the process of growing and imitating Christ has its starting point. Gradually, through religious consecration, one strives to cling unreservedly to Jesus—chaste, poor, and obedient—in these three dimensions of His earthly life.

The practice of the evangelical counsels in the Company of the Daughters of Charity related to the Sacrament of Baptism as the root of their existence is explained in the following way: “In order to serve Christ in persons who are poor, the Daughters of Charity commit themselves to live their baptismal consecration through the practice of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, which receive from this service their specific character.” (C 27) Through the profession of the evangelical counsels the Daughters of Charity endeavor to live and develop their baptismal consecration in daily life, so as to “imitate Christ more closely.”

Though the word *consecration* relates mainly to the act of professing the evangelical counsels in religious life (cf. CCL 654–58), this term has been applied in the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity in such phrases as: “they give themselves entirely and in community to the service of Christ” (C 7) or “serving is for them the expression of their total gift of self to God in the Company and gives it its full significance.” (C 16b) It is in this sense that the Daughters of Charity are indeed women “religious.” These terms were used by the founders and the Constitutions adopted them to describe the vocation of the Daughters of Charity.

Although the consecration of the Daughters of Charity differs from religious consecration, they both include similar evangelical radicalism and requirements. Saint Vincent’s words in this matter sound quite meaningful: “Making no other profession [Daughters of Charity—S.S.] to ensure their vocation than trust in Divine Providence, they have as much and even more need of virtue than if they had made their profession in a Religious Order.” (Vincent de Paul 2006, 531)

Being aware that the sisters ministered to the poor “out in the world” and that their vocation might be more exposed to temptations than in the cloister, St. Vincent explained: “[I]t’s so important that you are more virtuous than nuns. And if there’s one degree of perfection for members of Religious Orders, Daughters of Charity need two, because you run a great risk of being lost if you’re not virtuous.” (Vincent de Paul 2006, 527–28) The above seemed to be Vincent’s answer to frequent opinions among the sisters that the state of cloistered women religious was more perfect than the “loving state” of the Daughters of Charity. The founder assured them that this was not the case. Although he was full of admiration for the nuns, it was true that the Daughters of Charity were not nuns. Nevertheless, in all the reality surrounding

them, “they live in that state of perfection, if they’re true Daughters of Charity.” (Vincent de Paul 2004, 13) In order to confirm his way of thinking, he added: “I’ve never seen a more perfect state,” (Vincent de Paul 2004, 538) the state in which one lives their baptismal consecration, practicing the evangelical counsels and giving themselves wholeheartedly to the poor.

Servant of God Sr. Barbara Samulowska was baptized on January 22, 1865. That moment marked the beginning of a gradual discovery of the Sacrament of Baptism’s grace and a deeper sense of becoming like Christ. This evolution was happening mostly through faithful everyday life in the Vincentian charism, especially in the service to the poor in Guatemala. Particularly noteworthy are the testimonies of her co-workers who stressed her exceptional goodness, which distinguished her from the rest of the staff (cf. Pranga 2024, 13–19).

3. The Vow of Serving the Poor Versus Justice

The Company of the Daughters of Charity exists in the Church as a society of apostolic life. As such, it is expected to distinguish itself by a specific apostolic purpose. For the Daughters of Charity, this is accomplished through serving the most impoverished (*PE*, nos. 59, 369), which is expressed by the vow to serve the poor. The Constitutions of the Company name it as the first out of four, before chastity, poverty, and obedience (C 28a) because the three classic evangelical counsels must be understood and lived in relation to it (cf. Vincenzo de Paoli 1980; Delgado 1981). It is directly connected with the identity and aim that the Company fulfills. The formula of the vows specifies it as follows:

In response to the call of Christ, who invites me to follow Him and to be a witness to His charity to the poor, I... renew the promises of my Baptism and vow to God, for one year, chastity, poverty, and obedience to my legitimate Superiors, and to devote myself to the corporal and spiritual service of the poor, our true Masters, in the Company of the Daughters of Charity, in accordance with our Constitutions and Statutes. Grant me, O Lord, the grace of fidelity, through your Son Jesus Christ crucified, and through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin. (C 28b)

Remarkably, this specific character of the service—abundant in self-giving in the service of the poor, understood as the realization of love of Christ—played a key role in choosing the Company by the young visionary from Gietrzwałd. When the revelations ended, Barbara Samulowska stayed at the centers run by the Daughters of Charity. Undoubtedly, it influenced her decision to bind her life to this Company (cf. Wierzchosławski 1987, 215).

For the Daughters of Charity, the practice of the evangelical counsels needs to be always linked with serving Christ in the persons of the poor (C 27), and charity stands for one of its fundamental aspects. There is an urge to ask in what manner the co-founder, St. Vincent de Paul, proclaimed the patron of all works of charity in the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1885, understood charity. Although a precise definition of charity cannot be found in Vincent's writings, we may point to some crucial elements that define it.

The first essential element is showing God's merciful face to the poor—following the example of Jesus Christ—and out of concern for their salvation. It is the contemplation of Jesus, Incarnate Word, from where Vincent's charity and love for the poor stems, who, as Vincent taught, need to be treated as the person of Jesus (Vincent de Paul 2004, 216). The words of the postulator of the Vincentian congregations on this matter are truly meaningful:

It is not love for others that led him to sanctity, but rather sanctity truly and effectively shaped him to be abundant in love. The poor did not give him to God. Quite the opposite—God gave him to the poor. If he is perceived more as a philanthropist than a mystic, if he isn't thought of as a mystic then one makes a picture of Vincent de Paul that never existed. (Guerra 2024, 105)

Another vital element of charity is ministering in all places, to all poor people, especially those most in need, and ministering in cooperation with others. Vincent, a priest, was constantly on the lookout for ways to do this work. Gradually, his life changed into ministry. It is worth noting that in Vincent's time, society in his native country tended to hide the poor, often feeling ashamed of their presence. Poor people were taken away from the streets and locked in places like Hôtel-Dieu. Charity was not practiced through affirmation but rather through confinement. A relevant example would be Marseille with its *Vieille Charité*. The poor did receive adequate help, yet they remained socially and physically isolated. It was for them that Vincent fought for justice and freedom (cf. Krasucka 2024, 91).

The founder of the Daughters of Charity served galley convicts, as well as peasants living on the de Gondis' estate, always giving attention to what was happening around him. To him, every situation was a place of the revelation of God's will and action, the most significant of which were the events that took place in 1617 in Folleville (confession of a poor man) and Châtillon-les-Dombes (aiding an abandoned family). Meeting those poor persons was equivalent to meeting Christ, and this was how Vincent viewed this issue.

Vincent did not restrict himself to a particular form of poverty; he did not "specialize" in helping one chosen social group but struggled for each and every person's dignity of life (cf. Krasucka 2024, 90).

Yet another characteristic feature of Vincentian charity is the service of Christ in the poor, both corporally and spiritually. This is expressed by Vincent in the *Conference on the Service of the Sick*, delivered to the sisters on March 16, 1642:

We wouldn't, in fact, be doing enough for God and the neighbour if we only gave the sick poor food and medicine and if we didn't assist them, in accord with God's Plan, by the spiritual service we owe them. When you serve poor persons in this way, you'll be true Daughters of Charity, that is to say, daughters of God, and you'll be imitating Jesus Christ. (Vincent de Paul 2004, 50)

What is also important is the approach to charity, which gradually develops into a structured system and long-term care. In Châtillon-les-Dombes, Vincent realized that the suffering of the poor was not caused by the lack of merciful hands but by the lack of sufficient organization of their help. The municipal archives preserve the note stating this rule:

As indeed charity is a sure indication of true children of God, and one of its signs is visiting and feeding the poor and sick, some pious girls and virtuous local ladies of Châtillon-les-Dombes, diocese of Lyon, wanting to get from God the grace of being His true daughters, agreed to help the inhabitants of their city, both financially and spiritually. They suffered more because of the lack of organisation providing help, than because of the lack of compassionate people. (MACH 1617, document 126)

Another distinctive component of Vincent's experience should be highlighted. The duty of people in the service of the poor is to put on the spirit of Jesus Christ, i.e., the spiritual robe of the Vincentian virtues. Referring to Vincent's Conference, dating back to November 1, 1658, the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity recommend the sisters to perform charitable acts in the spirit of the Gospel. "[Sisters—S.S.] serve Him [Jesus—S.S.] in His suffering members 'with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect and devotion.'" (C 10b)

Bringing help is a desired activity; however, for St. Vincent, it was the manner in which it was performed that remained extremely important. Thus, in the closing scene of the film *Monsieur Vincent* (1947), Maurice Cloche, the director, put in a moving scene with St. Vincent addressing a young Daughter of Charity who was going on her first mission with the words:

Jeanne, you will soon realise that charity is a heavy load to carry. It's heavier than a pot of soup and a basket of bread. But you will always keep your tenderness and your smile. It is not hard to serve soup and bread. Even the rich can do that. But you are a servant of the poor, a Daughter of Charity, always smiling, always in a good mood. They are your masters. Touchy and demanding masters, as you'll see. The uglier and the dirtier they are,

the more unfair and vulgar they are, the more love you'll have to give. Only because of your love, and your love alone, will the poor forgive you for the bread you're giving them. (Guerra 2024, 110)

Although charity is an essential element of living the vow of service of the poor in the Company of the Daughters of Charity, one may come across the following argument in the *Letters by Vincent*:

I praise God for the charity the City of Marseilles is showing to the poor in their present need, and for the timely help you have procured for the convicts suffering from the cold weather and poverty. God will grant you the grace, Monsieur, of softening our hearts toward the wretched creatures and of realizing that in helping them we are doing an act of justice and not of mercy! (Vincent de Paul 1997, 115)

The above words lead to the conclusion that the fundamental element that builds the service of the poor is not so much charity but justice. Vincent's words addressed to the sisters confirm this:

But you, Sisters, will be suitable mothers if you see to the needs of these little creatures, instruct them in the knowledge of God, and correct them with fairness accompanied by gentleness. (Vincent de Paul 2004, 113)

Here, it seems appropriate to refer to how Vincent understood justice. In another *Conference to the Daughters of Charity of 11 November 1657*, he said:

To leave everything you have in this world, Sisters,—father, mother, brothers, sisters, relations, friends, and possessions if you have any, and even your country! Why? To serve those who are poor, to instruct them, and to help them get to paradise. Is there anything more beautiful and more admirable? If we could see such a Sister, we'd see her soul shining like the sun, as Our Lord says in Holy Scripture, 'The just man is like the sun' (cf. Matt 13:43). "Sisters, if you only realised what a grace it is to serve those who are poor and to be called by God for that purpose!" (Vincent de Paul 2004, 271–72)

The Founder of the Company relates to the classical rule of law defined by the Roman jurist Ulpian, living in the 3rd century:

"Justice is a steady and eternal will to give what is really due to each individual. These are the rules of law: make an honest living, do not harm the other, give what is really due to each individual" (Lat. *Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi. Iuris praecepta sunt haec: honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere*). (Jońca 2011)

The statement “give what is really due to each individual” (*suum cuique tribuere*) forces us to reconsider what is human and proper to a man, what a person really needs to be himself/herself and to live a human life. According to the ancient sentence above, living in a human way means giving what is truly due to each human being. Justice, as it is understood in this manner, leads not to perceive a human in terms of whether he or she deserves specific help but to recognize what their needs are at a given time.

Interestingly enough, the mentioned definition of law given by the Roman jurist, particularly the *suum cuique tribuere* component, derives from family relations. Back then, lawyers drew inspiration from family rules, where a person would often receive more than he or she deserved or the law required. This is how people build relationships with one another, which enables them to see what the others really need.

Vincent de Paul firmly believed that, through the service of the poor, justice, above all, was provided, and that it should always accompany charity. His reflection on justice could be summarized in two sentences: “justice should always be combined with charity” and “there is no love if it is not coupled with justice.” (Baylach 1995, 329)

4. Vow(s) in the Life of Sister Barbara Samulowska, D.C.

In 1877, when the Gietrzwałd revelations ended, visionaries Justyna Szafrzyńska and Barbara Samulowska lived at a center run by the Daughters of Charity, located in the Warmia region, for safety reasons. In 1880, Barbara went to Chełmno, where she served the poor together with other Daughters of Charity. It was then and there that a desire to become a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul grew in her (cf. Ryska 2004, 81). She began her initial vocational discernment. Barbara was a candidate and participated in various activities for the service to the poor run by the Daughters of Charity. A year later, she began her mission at a nursery school that had been granted permission by the Prussian government to reopen on May 31, 1881. On the very first day, approximately 130 children were brought by their parents, and after 3–4 weeks, the number of children increased to 300 (cf. Wierchosławski 1987, 215).

In late 1880 and early 1881, a famine and typhus epidemic broke out in the area of Chełmno. According to the information from the Chronicles, the house of the Daughters of Mercy was virtually besieged by the poor (cf. ADCCCh Chronicle (1850–1950), 220–221). Apart from assisting the poor, the sisters from Chełmno were responsible for preparing children for their First Holy Communion, and also for taking care of the poorest high school students. Moreover, they were in charge of the sewing workshop for girls, a place to which Barbara also came, as indicated by the

report applying to her Seminary period, mentioning her ability to sew (cf. ADCCh Chronicle (1850–1950), 143).

After an almost eight-year interval, on December 8, 1881, the postulatum was reopened. Despite the deficiency in vocations, not all candidates were admitted, as the rules described by the superiors were strictly followed, and great caution was recommended. Barbara Samulowska was admitted to postulancy on August 22, 1883. It began on September 8 of the same year (cf. ADCCh II A/III-2/2s, 394–95, 425).

As the personal file of the Servant of God shows, she was admitted to the Seminary at the Motherhouse in Paris. On January 9, Barbara entered the Seminary and began her retreat. After that, she officially began her Seminary on January 19. The latter date is given as the starting point of her incorporation into the Company. These dates come from her personal files (cf. APHG 2005–2006, fols. 1216–1217). She received the habit on November 8, and she took the name of Stanisława to emphasize her Polish origin and her spiritual bonds with St. Stanisław Kostka, patron of the Polish youth and a great advocate of the Mother of God (cf. Brzozowski 2009, 146).

After finishing the formation, the young Sr. Samulowska made her vows for the first time on February 2, 1889 (cf. Brzozowski 2009, 146). At this early stage of her missionary work, she stayed in Paris, in the house of Belleville, guided by Sr. Marie Mauche. Then in 1895, she started on her new mission among the poor of Guatemala, where she stayed until the end of her life (APHG 2005–2006, fols. 1317).

Being on a mission for 55 years, she fulfilled her vow of service to the poor, primarily focusing on three key groups: the poor, the sick, and medical students. With great respect, Sr. Stanisława treated the needy and always tried to be at their disposal. One of the sisters confirmed:

I observed a great love towards the poor in her, particularly when I was a doorkeeper, she told me many times: “whenever a poor person comes, look for me, do not allow them to wait long, call me at once.” ... I witnessed material and spiritual assistance, which she provided. She said frequently: “If a poor man is looking for me while I am not around, please, get Sister X to serve him, as no one must leave without being paid attention to.” (Cybula 2006, 97)

Sister Stanisława met the most urgent needs of the poor. She also strove to provide them with honest work whenever possible. Above all, she would make sure that the sick had everything they needed. During this time, she served alongside other sisters in the hospitals of Guatemala City, Antigua, and Quetzaltenango. Warm as she was, she did not hesitate to point out others’ impatience toward the sick, reprimanding: “By what right do you behave in such a manner towards the sick? We are meant to treat them with more patience and love.” One of her patients left a testimony of her: “An angel among the sick, full of sweetness and hope.” (APHG Sección I.J.19.60.33)

Through her attitude, Sr. Samulowska had a positive effect on the medical staff working at the Central Hospital in the capital of Guatemala. She was able to notice

very personal deficiencies. She was motherly and open. She helped medical students, especially those who struggled financially with their studies. She acted discreetly, avoiding any public recognition (cf. Pranga 2024, 15). What is worth stressing is Sr. Samulowska's manner of referring to others. The witnesses of her life emphasized her gentleness, cordiality, and respect for everyone. Many sisters agreed that extraordinary goodness led her to sanctity (APHG 1950, no. 616).

Among many testimonies describing her service to the poor and her life in the community, we find a unique opinion. One of her fellow Daughters of Charity underlines: "She was known for extraordinary goodness." Another sister mentioned her motherly way of behaving and her "goodness which is very unusual." (APHG Sección 1.J.19.60.33)

The way in which she lived her vow to serve the poor was undoubtedly Vincentian. She was often depicted as "a living rule" by the sister who worked with her. If the Church officially declares her Blessed, her sanctity will not be considered to be the result of the grace of seeing and speaking to the Mother of God (although this certainly helped her to trust Jesus through her spiritual friendship with His Mother), but the realization of her Vincentian vocation, which, among other things, led her to acquire holiness through the vow of the service of the poor (cf. AMP AA1/2), giving with love what others lacked, in order to live their lives with dignity.

Conclusions

Although the vows of the Daughters of Charity are considered non-religious, they demand no less radical commitment from them and remain adequate for this society of apostolic life. They are temporary and renewed each year, in order to reaffirm one's first choice and receive new strengths and graces to live and persevere in this vocation. Therefore, the vows do not make a Daughter of Charity, but they are the result of being a Daughter of Charity and an aid to coming one more perfectly.

In addition, the vows open up the space to deepen God's grace. Vincent de Paul encouraged sisters to live the vows in the context of religious virtue; therefore, the act of consecration of the Daughters of Charity is the very realization of the words "I believe...."

The fundamental aspect of the vows pronounced by the Daughters of Charity is the fact that they are understood in the light of the vow of service to the poor. The other vows are understood and lived by the sisters in relation to this special vow. Vincent de Paul was convinced that, above all, one does justice through serving the poor, and justice needs to be accompanied by charity.

The life of Sr. Barbara Stanisława Samulowska, D.C., is undoubtedly an example of the living out of the vow of service to the poor. Her just service combined with

charity was not so much the privilege of the Marian revelations which she experienced at Gietrzwałd, as the fulfillment of the charism and aim of the Company to which she belonged. Her fidelity to the charism proves her holiness, and it is holiness that keeps the Vincentian charism alive and up-to-date.

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