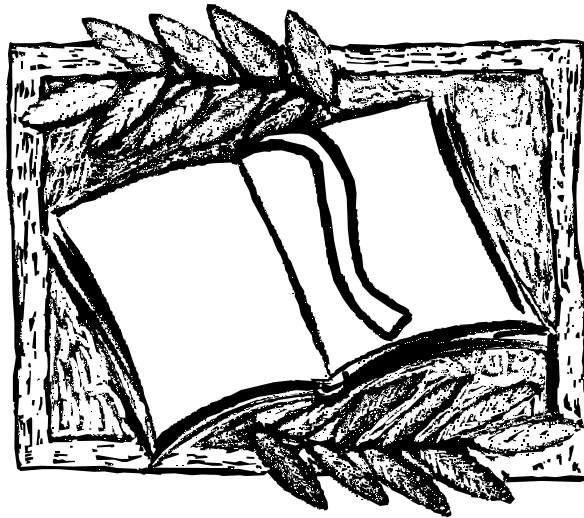


VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

First Quarter 2021



Liturgical Year: B

(January—February—March 2021)

Available on SVdPUSA.org





HOW TO LEAD THE VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS IN A CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION:

Leader describes to the group the process which is going to take place:

- Provide a copy for each member of your Conference for their personal reflection
- Stress that sharing is not compulsory and mention the need for confidentiality
- Ask, or assign, different members to read the different sections:
 - Gospel reading
 - Reflection
 - Vincentian Meditation

OPENING PRAYER/QUIETING DOWN PERIOD

Leader invites group to:

- Become relaxed and aware of God's presence with us
- "Let Go" of distractions and quietly pray to the Holy Spirit

READING OF THE VINCENTIAN WEEKLY REFLECTION

- Each section is read aloud, slowly and prayerfully, by the different members
- Hearing different voices will allow different emphasis on words/phrases

QUIET PERIOD

Leader invites everyone:

- To quietly reflect on the readings and notice if anything strikes them
- Introduces the Discussion Question suggested in the Reflection
- Allows 2-3 minutes of quiet – don't hurry this. God speaks to us in the silence.

SHARING

Leader invites members who wish to share on the Discussion Question, or on how the one of the readings struck them. Possibly not everyone will share, but time should be allowed for each person who wishes to share his/her thoughts. It is important that you resist the urge either to prod members to share, or to try to "fill the silence" with your own thoughts.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader closes the Prayer Reflection by beginning the Closing Prayer, and all answer the response (in bold).

(This entire process should take about 10-15 minutes)

INTRODUCTION



St. Vincent de Paul never wrote a book about his spiritual teachings. But we find the living voice of the saint in his letters and conferences in which he trained his followers for the mission of service to the poor.

The two fundamental sources of his teaching are the GOSPEL and LIFE. He wanted his followers to put the whole of the Gospel into the whole of their lives, and he never wearied of deepening both with all the faith that God had put into his heart. That is why all that Vincent says to us has the simplicity of our everyday life and the penetrating strength of the Word of God.

The Vincentian Weekly Reflections are therefore offered to all who strive to serve the poor in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. The prayer and reflections are based on the Sunday Gospel of the Liturgical Calendar, together with the feast days of some of the saints of our Vincentian Family. Each reflection offers a time for prayer, silence and discussion so that our everyday life, like Vincent, can become penetrated with the strength of the Word of God.

You may want to run copies for each member of your Conference so that they may take them home for personal reflection during the week.

LITURGICAL YEAR B

First Quarter - 2021

January

January 1 Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God
January 3 Epiphany of the Lord
January 10 Baptism of the Lord
First Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 17 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 24 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 31 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February

February 7 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 7 Feast of Blessed Rosalie Rendu
February 14 Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time
February 17 Ash Wednesday
February 21 First Sunday of Lent
February 28 Second Sunday of Lent

March

March 7 Third Sunday of Lent
March 14 Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 21 Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 28 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

January 1, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 2:16-21)

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Reflection:

Often New Year's resolutions are about such things as losing weight, trying to stop smoking, cleaning up our language, etc. The readings for this festival honoring Mary might challenge us and our resolution-making in another direction. Perhaps this year we might resolve to take time each day to see and hear what God is revealing to us in the ordinary things of our lives: in the grateful smile of a child, in the gift of a compliment, in the unexpected call or visit of a friend. Also, we might resolve to spend more time, as Mary did, pondering and reflecting in our hearts God's mystery of salvation. We might set aside a special time each day to pray and then stick to it. (Living Liturgy, p.30)

Vincenian Meditation:

Mary is the ideal disciple, the model listener. She hears God's word and acts on it. In Luke's first two chapters Mary is evangelized by Gabriel, by Elizabeth, by the shepherds, by Simeon, by Anna, and by Jesus himself. All of them proclaim the good news of God's presence and sing in praise of God's goodness. Luke tells us that Mary kept all these things in her heart, turning them over and over again. Mary is indeed the "Listening Disciple", and this is the core of New Testament spirituality: all disciples, like Mary, are called to listen to the word of God attentively and act on it. Let us ask from Mary the grace to be a listener, "to listen to the word of God and act on it. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 110-111)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

What New Year's resolution do you want to make this year?

Closing Prayer:

Mary, you who are the Mother of God, we now pray:

-help us to see and hear what God is revealing in our lives.

Mary, wellspring of grace and peace,

-help us to take time to ponder and reflect.

Mary, you who are the "Listening Disciple",

-help us to listen to the word of God and act on it. Amen.



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 3, 2021

Gospel: (Matthew 2:1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ...Herod sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child..." After their audience with the King, they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reflection:

What happens if we would lead our life as if the star stopped on us? The answer to this question is most startling when we consider the gospel as a whole: what it means and what happens is that the only way to light and life is to die to self so that darkness can be overcome. Life has its sorrows and sufferings. It also has its joys and celebrations: the mystery of salvation has been revealed in Jesus. And in us. (Living Liturgy, p.32)

Vincenian Meditation:

The Magi were searchers. They traveled by night, following a star, moving like pilgrims, struggling through deserts. That is so often the human way. Most of us grope in the darkness most of our lives. The wise men's search revealed to them how closely light and darkness, birth and death, joy and sorrow, belief and unbelief are interlocked. It is crucial for us to recognize ourselves as searchers, as did the Magi. Our life is a journey, in which we often travel by night. In fact, the Lord's star is visible for us only when we acknowledge the darkness. Life holds so many unanswered questions, so many unfulfilled desires. Our hearts find ultimate fulfillment only in God, whom we search for during the entire course of our lives. This is what the Magi proclaim to us very clearly. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 81)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How has the Lord's star been visible to you in times of questioning and darkness?

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, bring light to the darkness as we search for you,

-Let your light shine upon us.

As the star guided the Magi,

-May we be guided by your light and grace.

May we, like the Magi, offer you our gifts each day,

-As we discover you in the midst of our lives. Amen



THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

January 10, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1: 7-11)

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Reflection:

Baptism is not something that happened in the past, an event over and done with. None of us has "been baptized"; we are all **being** baptized. Baptism plunges us into an ongoing way of living whereby our lives are patterned after Christ's. John's baptism was one of repentance, "turning from, turning toward." At his baptism Jesus turned from his private life to his public life and mission. John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit who is the source of power for his mission. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we become adopted sons and daughters of God, God's "beloved," too. By this indwelling, Jesus' mission is our own mission. Jesus' way of living is our own way of living. (Living Liturgy, p.36)

Vincenian Meditation:

Our Mission Statement tells us: Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How has the mission of Jesus become our mission, Jesus' way of living our way of living?

Closing Prayer:

The heavens are opened, and the Spirit of God comes to rest upon Jesus,

-Spirit of God, rest upon us

For all who have been baptized by water and the Holy Spirit,

-may we join together to grow spiritually

Christ, the Anointed, you began your public ministry after your baptism,

-may we offer person-to-person service to the suffering

Christ, the Beloved, you emptied yourself in love for the human family,

-open our hearts to the poorest and most abandoned in the spirit of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic. Amen.



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 17, 2021

Gospel: (John 1:35-42)

John was standing with two of his disciples and as he watched Jesus walk by, John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "*What are you looking for?*"

They said to him, "Rabbi"—which means Teacher—"where are you staying?" He said to them, "*Come, and you will see.*" So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

Reflection:

We cannot truly be disciples of Christ unless we, too, wait to hear God's call and respond by transforming our lives, evidenced in the simple willingness to be obedient to God's will. This means more than keeping the commandments, it means that our whole lives are directed to waiting and listening for God's self-revelation. Sometimes this revelation comes through others—perhaps in their cry for help. Sometimes the revelation comes through prayer in which we take some time to listen to God. However, when the revelation or call comes, if we respond, we will be transformed. And Jesus will turn and ask us, "What are you looking for?" (Living Liturgy, p.42)

Vincenian Meditation:

Our Identity Statement tells us: As a reflection of the whole family of God, Members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group, and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

"What were you looking for" when you joined the Society?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you turned and asked the disciples, "*What are you looking for?*"

-we heard your call to be a disciple and we followed you.

We thank you for the call to be a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

-may our Conference be a reflection of the whole family of God.

You call us to be united in a spirit of poverty, humility and sharing,

-may we be nourished by prayer and reflection.

You call us to mutually supportive gatherings,

-may we share a deep sense of friendship.

You call us to adherence to our basic Rule,

-may we be faithful to the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam. Amen.



THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 24, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1: 14-20)

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: *"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."* As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, *"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."* Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

Reflection:

The transformation that is a necessary consequence of hearing Jesus' call to discipleship takes place through repentance. Jesus calls and the disciples abandon all to follow him. Jesus' call was to simple fishermen while they were plying their trade. The starting point for Jesus' call to discipleship isn't with "holy" or "perfect" people; the starting point is with sinful humanity. The good news is that we *can repent* and believe. All we need to do is let go and let our daily lives be characterized by repentance and belief. Jesus gives us a continuing call. Our transformation doesn't come all at once but takes place throughout our lives. We only have to repent and believe in the gospel, for indeed the kingdom of God is at hand. (Living Liturgy, p.46)

Vincentian Meditation:

Our Mission Statement tells us: Organized locally Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, **Vincentians see the face of Christ.**

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you seen the face of Christ in those you serve?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to respond to the call of discipleship, quickly and decisively,

-Merciful God, hear us!

For the grace to witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice,

-Merciful God, hear us!

For the grace to collaborate with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes,

-Merciful God, hear us!

For the grace to make no distinction in those we serve because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ,

-Merciful God, hear us! Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 31, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1:21-28)

Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. The people were spellbound by his teaching because he taught with authority and not like the scribes. There appeared in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit that shrieked: "What do you want of us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him sharply: "*Be quiet! Come out of the man!*" At that the unclean spirit convulsed the man violently and with a loud shriek came out of him. All who looked were amazed. They began to ask one another: "What does this mean? A completely new teaching in a spirit of authority! He gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey him!" From that point on his reputation spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Reflection:

From that point on, they "remembered" and told the story and "his reputation spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." "Remember" is a word that is often on our lips when we pray and when we speak to our friends. Sometimes we also feel ourselves to be better people when we *remember* the goodness of others to us, their generosity, their unselfishness, their tenderness, their thoughtfulness. This word "remember" is important, for Jesus has also done great things for us. (Living Liturgy, p.42)

Vincenian Meditation:

The little word "remember" is at the heart of our greatest prayer, the Mass. The Mass is the great prayer in which along with Jesus we ask God the Father to remember the life, sufferings, death and resurrection of His only Son. Christians gather together and offer Mass, renewing again and again the great act of "*remembering*," while at the same time making present again the offering that Jesus made of Himself on the cross. In doing so, we are bringing down upon the entire world, whether we know it or not, an uncountable number of graces, favors and blessings. Every day we hear some frightening things about the cruelty and wickedness of men. What would the world be like if it did not have the Sacrifice of the Mass? Always remember that there is no grace, no joy, no good thing in this world that has not come to us through Jesus Christ. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.587-588)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Remember and share some stories of the "great things that Jesus has done for you."

Closing Prayer:

Christ, healer of hearts,
-**teach us compassion for others.**
Christ, maker of peace,
-**help us bring peace to all people.**
Christ, the light of life,
-**show us the path of life. Amen**



FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 7, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1:29-39)

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him. Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

Reflection:

Jesus rose "very early before dawn" and went out to a "deserted place" to pray, to be in communion with God. He is able to turn his back on the adulation and keep his mission on a steady course because he does not lose sight of why he came—to preach the good news of salvation. He does not lose sight of his mission because he never loses sight of his Father. This is how we reorder ourselves—by praying, being in communion with God so that Jesus' mission is truly our own. (Living Liturgy, p.54)

Vincentian Meditation:

There is a balance in the activity of Jesus. There is prayer: liturgical prayer in the synagogue, and that is balanced by private prayer. There is hard work, and that is balanced by rest and relaxation with his apostles. We, as Vincentians, must have that same balance in our lives. St. Vincent wanted us to pray privately and to pray together: to work and to take time to be together in community. If we blend prayer, work and Conference life properly, then we will be balanced and effective Vincentians after the heart of St. Vincent. (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.681)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In our lives as Vincentians, do we have a balance or an unbalance between prayer, service and community?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to pray privately and to pray together,

-Lord, hear us!

For the grace to serve the poor with dedication and faithfulness,

-Lord, hear us!

For the grace to support and care for each other in our Conference,

-Lord, hear us!

For the grace to be balanced and effective Vincentians after the heart of St. Vincent,

- Lord, hear us! Amen



FEAST OF BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU, DC

February 7

Gospel: (John 15: 9-17)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love. You will live in my love if you keep my commandments, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and live in his love. All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

Reflection:

On April 23, 1833, Frederic Ozanam's twentieth birthday, six students met in the office of their mentor Emmanuael Bailly, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was born. They resolved to respond to Christ's call by dedicating themselves to the poor after the example of St. Vincent de Paul. They asked Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, for the names and addresses of several families in need. Sr. Rosalie was known as "The Mother of the Poor" in the Mouffetard Quarter of Paris. She taught Frederic much about the poor and how to minister to them with love and respect. The first members of the Society were determined not only to bring bread, but, above all, friendship to the poor. (US Manual of the SVDP, p.179)

Vincentian Meditation:

Sr. Rosalie Rendu told Frederic and the first members of the Society: "Always remember, that if our childhood has been one of constant want, perhaps, we too, would have given away to envy and hatred, as I must admit have many of the poor we serve. Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you can bring to them. If you wish to be loved, you must love, and if you have nothing to give, give yourself." (Sr. Rosalie Rendu)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How do Vincentians live the spirit of Frederic and Sr. Rosalie, by bringing love and friendship to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Holy God, we thank you for the gift to us of Sr. Rosalie Rendu,

-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving.

For the poor we serve,

-Grant us the grace to serve in friendship.

For the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

-Grant us the grace to live the spirit of Sr. Rosalie. Amen



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 14, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1: 40-45)

A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "*I will do it. Be made clean.*" The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. He said to him, "See that you tell no one anything..." But the man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

Reflection:

Jesus was "moved with pity", and so he chose to heal the leper. And in spite of Jesus' command to "tell no one anything," Jesus knew that the leper would not be able to keep the good news of his healing quiet. And, yes, the leper does "publicize the whole matter." Indeed, the leper proclaims the gospel. Perhaps Jesus healed the leper because he recognized one who would be a disciple and spread the good news. Jesus wished that the leper be made clean, he had the power to heal. But more important, his heart was filled with mercy. And Jesus was announced to all by this leper who became a disciple. Jesus' commission to us is to tell everyone the good news—do we tell no one? (Living Liturgy, p.58)

Vincentian Meditation:

"It's not for everyone. It's not for anyone. But being a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul—being a Vincentian—is for some. It is a special calling by God. A member of the Society puts his or her faith into action. The Vincentian vocation is the intimate desire to participate personally and directly in helping the needy by person-to-person contact and by the gift of one's heart and friendship, doing so within the communal spirit of a Conference of lay persons each inspired by the same vocation. The Vincentian vocation may be expressed in many ways and with different shades of meaning. Practical translation of faith into action, meditating upon it and adapting it to our changing world is the very life of every Vincentian, the very life of the Society. (US Manual of the SVDP, p.54)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How can we spread the "good news" of being a Vincentian?

Closing Prayer:

O God, we stand in gratitude for our vocation to be a Vincentian,
-give us the grace to offer our heart and friendship to the poor.
May we have the desire to serve the needy by person-to-person contact,
-give us the grace to invite others to join the Society.
May we have the grace to put our faith into action, to meditate upon it,
-and to adapt it to our changing world. Amen



ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17, 2021

Gospel: (Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"Be on guard against performing religious acts for people to see. When you give alms, for example, do not blow a horn before you in synagogues and streets like hypocrites looking for applause...Keep your deeds of mercy secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you are praying, do not behave like the hypocrites...Whenever you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees what no man sees, will repay you. When you fast, you are not to look glum as the hypocrites do...When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."*

Reflection:

In the gospel we hear Jesus direct his disciples to surrender their money in alms, their bodies in fasting, and their spirits in prayers. May Jesus gift us with his presence this Lent, so that we can be a gift to others in carrying out our service as we:

Fast from judging others; to feast on the Christ dwelling in them.

Fast from unrelenting pressures; to feast on unceasing prayer.

Fast from self-concern; to feast on compassion for others.

Vincentian Meditation:

"I should not judge the poor peasants, men or women, by their exterior nor by their apparent mental capacities. All the more is this so since very frequently they scarcely seem to have the appearance or intelligence of reasonable beings...But turn the medal, and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, whose will it was to be poor, is represented to us by these people." St. Vincent de Paul (McKenna, Praying with Vincent, p. 59)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Recall your last encounter with a poor person. Was it an occasion during which you saw below the surface-you turned the medal- and caught a glimpse of God's presence?

Closing Prayer:

Lent is the acceptable time for renewing our desire to serve as Jesus served, so we pray:

When we walk with those caught in the cycle of poverty,

Help us to see your face, O God!

When we look into the wondering eyes of a child,

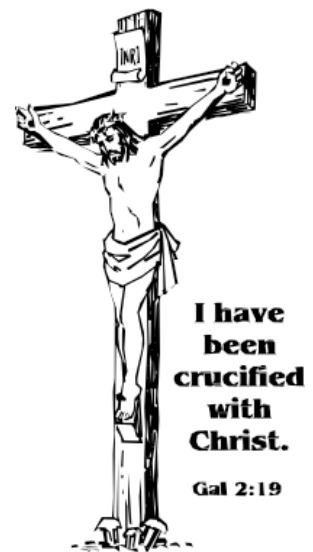
Help us to see your face, O God!

When we reach out to the homeless,

Help us to see your face, O God!

When we listen to the fading voice of the aged,

Help us to see your face, O God! Amen



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

February 21, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 1:12-15)

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: *"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Reflection:

Jesus went out into the desert to be alone. He is on the brink of inaugurating his public ministry. Something new and important is about to happen. He does the natural thing: goes off alone to think things through and confront the demons that would dissuade him from his mission. Then he goes to Galilee to proclaim the gospel of God. This defines in a nutshell what Lent is all about: we, too, spend extra time by ourselves during Lent so that we can come to the Easter celebration better able to proclaim the gospel. (Living Liturgy, p.74)

Vincenian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: Vincentians are called to holiness by striving to conform ourselves to Jesus, doing God's will, and devoting ourselves to the service of God's suffering and poor. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is composed of women and men who seek personal holiness by works of charity. In this essential way, the Society differs from charitable associations or agencies whose principal objective is not the spiritual advancement of their members but the doing of good for others. (US Manual of the SVDP, p.53)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How can we better take the time to pray both alone and at our Conference meetings so that we can truly proclaim the gospel of God?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, model of prayer,
-lead us into silence and prayer.

Jesus, model of compassion,
-give us merciful hearts.

Jesus, model of meekness and mildness,
-make us gentle and humble of heart.

Jesus, model of proclaiming God's kingdom,
-transform us so that we can extend your kingdom. Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

February 28, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 9:2-10)

Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white... Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

Reflection:

We can find the rhythm of the dying and rising of the paschal mystery everywhere. In the gospel we see the transfigured glory then allusion to Jesus' dying. In our daily lives we see the "dying and rising" between our work and leisure, between times with loved ones and times away, between success and failure, between doing something we would enjoy and doing something someone else would enjoy more. In our daily lives as we see the paschal mystery unfolding, the distance between the religious and secular spheres of our lives becomes less and less. Instead of putting religion in a neat box it becomes truly the very way we live. (Living Liturgy, p.78)

Vincentian Meditation:

"Pope John Paul II says to the laity: "There cannot be two parallel lives in your existence as lay men and women: on the one hand, the so-called 'spiritual life', with its values and demands; on the other, the so-called 'secular life,' that is life in a family, at work, social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture.... Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility are the occasions ordained by Providence for a 'continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity.'" (US Manual of the SVDP, p.59)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found that you no longer have "two parallel lives?"

Closing Prayer:

When we struggle with our own weaknesses,
 -Change our hearts, O God!
When we resist the call to conversion,
 -Change our hearts, O God!
When we become bitter and judgmental,
 -Change our hearts, O God! Amen



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 7, 2021

Gospel: (John 2:13-25)

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area saying, "*Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace.*" His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, "Zeal for your house will consume me." At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered, "*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.*"...He was speaking of the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection:

The simple call of the gospel is to see the signs of God in our midst. This story gives us a glimpse of the human struggle of often failing to see and believe the signs of God. Jesus showed us the signs so clearly; he was crucified and then raised up. Like Jesus, the zeal that ought to consume us, too, is a single-mindedness about suffering and dying to ourselves so that we, too, can live. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so will we be raised up. (Living Liturgy, p.84)

Vincenian Meditation:

St. Vincent tells us: "It is our vocation...to set people's hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on the earth in order to set it aflame with his love. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbor does not love him. I must love my neighbor as the image of God and the object of his love...I must act in such a way that people love their Creator and each other in mutual charity for the love of God who loved them so much that he delivered up his own Son to death for them." (US Manual of the SVDP, p.54)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Does zeal consume us, so that we can set people's hearts ablaze with God's love?

Closing Prayer:

When we look into the wondering eyes of a child,
 -Help us to set their hearts ablaze.
When we reach out to the homeless,
 -Help us to set their hearts ablaze.
When we walk with those caught in poverty,
 -Help us to set their hearts ablaze.
When we listen to the fading voice of the aged,
 -Help us to set their hearts ablaze. Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

March 14, 2021

Gospel: (John 3:14-21)

Jesus said to Nicodemus: *"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have life."* For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God...Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

Reflection:

Jesus is the One raised up and by whom we are saved, we only must gaze on him and believe in him. The light of Christ enables us to see; seeing is believing. But we can only come to the light and believe if we "live in the truth" which is expressed in good works. Light and faith are gifts, and we demonstrate that we accept these gifts when we do good works. God demonstrates great love for us by sending the Son to be lifted up on the Cross and then raising him to eternal life. We demonstrate our great love for God by doing good works. Our good works: reaching out to others, doing our daily tasks for our family with love and care, working professionally and honestly, acting justly and charitably, then our way of being is "lifted up." This is how we live in the truth, so that our works may be clearly seen as done in God. (Living Liturgy, p.90)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual for the Society we read: On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the canonization of St. Vincent de Paul, Pope John Paul II quoted the famous historian of Christian spirituality, Henri Bremond, about Vincent de Paul: "It was not love for men that led him to sanctity; rather it was sanctity that made him truly and effectively charitable; it was not the poor that gave him to God, but, on the contrary, God gave him to the poor." God acts in the same way in the lives of all Vincentians. Holiness makes them truly and effectively charitable. It is God who gives them to the poor. (US Manual of the SVDP, p.53)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found that it is "God who gave you to the poor?"

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you urge us to take up our cross, and so we pray:

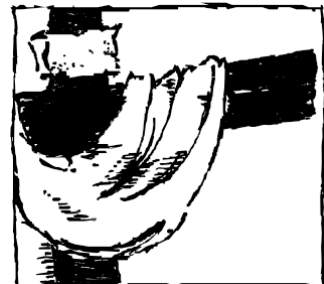
-Jesus, we turn to you.

For the grace to love life and faith into our families,

-Jesus, we turn to you.

For the grace to have "God send us to the poor,"

-Jesus, we turn to you. Amen



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

March 21, 2021

Gospel: (John 12:20-33)

Jesus answered them, *"Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit...Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me."*

Reflection:

Serving means following; following Jesus means serving. Also, serving means entering into Jesus' death – like Jesus we must also be the grain that dies to produce much fruit. When we follow Jesus into his service, we, too, have the pledge of receiving the same honor that the Father bestows on Jesus. We see Jesus by *being* Jesus. It's that simple! And that challenging. We see Jesus in those who lay down their life in servanthood and others see Jesus in us when we are servants. (Living Liturgy, p.94)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual of the Society, we read: If Jesus stands at the center of Vincentian spirituality, the poor stand next to him. Jesus' words, *"You always will have the poor with you,"* are the reason for being for Vincentian existence. Blessed Frederic said: "Sons of Saint Vincent de Paul, let us learn of him to forget ourselves, to devote ourselves to the service of God and the good of men. Let us learn of him that holy preference which shows most love to those who suffer most." Mercy is a facet of charity that calls us, first to identify in spirit with our suffering brothers and sisters. Mercy calls also for outward signs and actions. We weep with those who weep, we rejoice with those who rejoice. We empathize; we reach out in compassion. (US Manual, P.16-17)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do we see Jesus in those who lay down their life in servanthood and how do others see Jesus in us when we are servants?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, we seek refuge in your loving heart and so we pray:

-Jesus, keep us close to you.

For the grace to be your servant,

-Jesus, keep us close to you.

For all members of the Society who model a life of service,

-Jesus, keep them close to you.

For our families and friends who teach us how to be compassionate,

-Jesus, keep them close to you.

For all those who are suffering, especially the sick and the dying,

-Jesus, keep them close to you. Amen



PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

March 28, 2021

Gospel: (John 12:12-16)

When the great crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel." Jesus found an ass and sat upon it, as is written: *Fear no more, O daughter Zion; see, your king comes, seated upon an ass's colt.* His disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified they remembered that these things were written about him and that they had done this for him.

Reflection:

The essence of discipleship is that we carry his cross. Disciples go wherever the Master goes. Coming to understand who Jesus is, his mission, and how that relates to us his disciples is not an easy task; it takes a lifetime. Like Jesus, to be faithful followers by taking up our cross means we will *feel* this in the depths of our humanity: we will suffer, we will lose heart, we will cry out to God to take life's miserable lot away from us. But also like Jesus we have divine life which gives us the strength to carry our cross. It is divine life pulsating within us – which we first receive at our baptism – that raises up our humanity enabling us to be faithful disciples carrying our crosses. (Living Liturgy, p.98)

Vincenian Meditation:

Jesus' dying love gives meaning to the many "crosses" his followers are called to bear...the cross today may take the following forms especially:

- laboring daily, and perseveringly, in the service of the poor
- sharing the helplessness and pain of the marginalized
- standing in solidarity with the abandoned and suffering
- accepting painful events, that we can do nothing about
- bearing sickness, our own and that of others
- coming to grips with aging
- enduring the death of friends and family

The following of the crucified Lord is the supreme act of faith; it is a surrender in hope and love into the incomprehensible mystery of God. (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p. 46-47)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

What "crosses" have you carried in being Jesus' disciple?

Closing Prayer:

As we enter the mystery of the passion of Christ, may our hearts be touched anew by the depth of his love, and so we pray:

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer.

That this Holy Week may deepen our understanding of the cross,

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer.

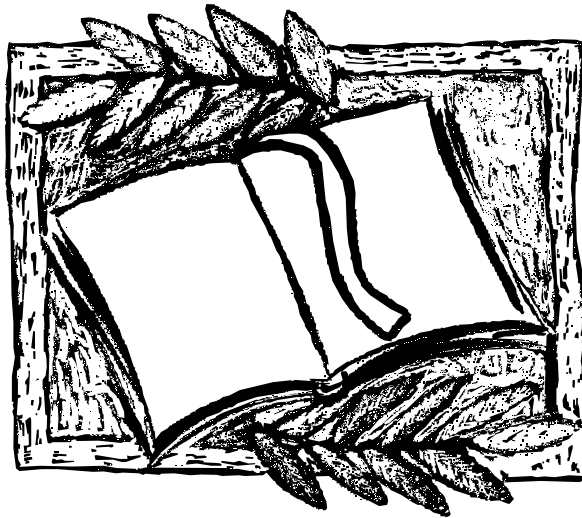
For all who suffer injustice and abuse, may we help them carry their cross,

-Christ, our Savior, hear our prayer. Amen



VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Second Quarter 2021



Liturgical Year: B

(April—May—June 2021)

Available on SVdPUSA.org



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle B

Second Quarter-2021

APRIL

April 4	Easter Sunday
April 11	Second Sunday of Easter
April 18	Third Sunday of Easter
April 25	Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 28	<i>Feast of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla</i>

MAY

May 2	Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 9	Sixth Sunday of Easter
<i>May 9</i>	<i>St. Louise de Marillac</i>
May 16	Ascension
May 23	Pentecost
May 30	Trinity Sunday

JUNE

June 6	The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 11	Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
June 13	Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 20	Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 24	Feast of Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
June 27	Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

EASTER SUNDAY

April 4, 2021

Gospel: (John 20:1-9)

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in...and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

Reflection:

We can hardly grasp the joy and glory of Easter Sunday! The disciples didn't understand, but they came to believe. So can we. Easter Sunday is more than a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. It is also an invitation to each of us to preach the gospel and take our place in the long line of witnesses to Jesus' resurrected life. This is why we are so awed at the mystery: not only that Jesus was raised from the dead but that God entrusts us with Jesus' mission and to be witness of God's mighty deed of resurrection. It appears as though God trusts us a great deal. (Living Liturgy, p.112)

Vincenian Meditation:

St. Vincent wrote: "My friend, you belong to God. Let this reality color your entire existence. Give yourself up to God ceaselessly with every beat of your heart. We are commissioned not only to God, but to cause Him to be loved. It is not enough for us to love God, if our neighbor does not love Him also. Only through the charity of our Lord can we transform the world. The wonderful thing is that in letting His love pass through us, we are ourselves converted. The poor are our masters; they are our kings; we must obey them. It is no exaggeration to call them this, since our Lord is in the poor." (USA Manual P.40)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Name the "Easter" people you have known - true witnesses of God's love.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, in your resurrection, you brought joy to the disciples,
- fill us with joy.

Lord, in your resurrection, there is hope for a world suffering from injustice,
-enliven our hope.

Lord, in your resurrection, you turned unbelief to belief in the hearts of your followers,
-increase our faith.

Lord, in your resurrection, you gifted the fearful with peace,
-deepen our peace. Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 11, 2021

Gospel: (John 20:19-31)

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "*Peace, be with you.*" Then he said to Thomas, "*Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.*" Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God." Jesus said to him, "*Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*"

Reflection:

The remarkable thing about belief is that it always has room for unbelief. Like mystery itself, belief isn't something we have and that's it. There is always room to grow in our belief, just as there is always room for our unbelief. We call Thomas "doubting Thomas" and so he was. Truth be told, so are all of us. There come times in our lives when we are simply overcome with emptiness and absence—perhaps the death of a loved one, the painful illness of a small child, loss of a job. At these times doubt or unbelief are natural. This doesn't mean we have lost our faith, it means that at these times we need to keep our eyes focused on the risen Christ and, in due time, we know the Lord is with us inviting us to belief. (Living Liturgy, p.116)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Blessed Frederic Ozanam wrote "... the poor we see with the eyes of flesh; they are there and we can put finger and hand in their wounds and the scars of the crown of thorns are visible on their foreheads; and at this point incredulity no longer has place and we should fall at their feet and say with the Apostle, *Tu es Dominus et Deus meus (You are my Lord and my God!)*. You are our masters, and we will be your servants. You are for us the sacred images of that God whom we do not see, and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we not love Him in your person?"

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Share a time when you moved from unbelief to belief.

Closing Prayer:

Risen Lord, your resurrection brought joy to all believers,

- give joy to those who live in sadness.

Risen Lord, your resurrection brought hope to all believers

-give hope to those who live in despair.

Risen Lord, your resurrection turned unbelief to belief,

-give faith to those who live in doubt.

Risen Lord, your resurrection gifted the fearful with peace,

-give peace to those who live in suffering. Amen



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 18, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 24: 35-48)

Jesus stood in their midst and said to them, "*Peace be with you.*"...Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "*Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.*"

Reflection:

Jesus "was made known" in repentance and forgiveness. Forgiveness is an encounter with the risen Christ. When we offer and receive forgiveness our hearts ought to burn because of the encounter with the risen Christ within us. This is resurrected life: "You are forgiven." This is our witness to the resurrection: "I forgive you." We must walk and act like a forgiven people. Forgiveness is the virtue that enables us not to allow past hurts to determine our decisions and actions in the here and now. Forgiveness opens up the space for creating together with the one forgiven a new future where we can live in peace. This is how Jesus is known. (Living Liturgy, p.120)

Vincetian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: The Conference meeting is the heart from which SVDP activity radiates and the sanctuary where its work is organized. The meeting provides a privileged occasion wherein the love of Christ is manifested member to member, where members are open, one to another, embracing each other as brother and sister, where the healing presence of Christ can be experienced and can grow to overflowing dimensions that can be shared with others. (US Manual, P.95)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Are our Conference meetings truly a place of forgiveness and peace?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, your resurrection brought forgiveness to the disciples,

-fill us with your peace!

For the grace to labor in your name,

-fill us with your strength!

For the grace to forgive and to be forgiven,

-fill us with your compassion!

For the grace to bring your peace to all Conference meetings,

-fill us with your trust!

For the grace to be witnesses to your resurrection,

-fill us with your joy!

Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 25, 2021

Gospel: (John 10:11-18)

Jesus said: *"I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd, I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."*

Reflection:

The good shepherd is concerned about, cares for, and protects the sheep even to the point of laying down his life for the sheep. The good shepherd fulfills the obligation of relationship. The relationship between shepherd and sheep ("I know mine and mine know me") is likened to the relationship between the Father and the Son. This relationship requires of us disciples the same mission—to lay down our lives, too. Shepherding is serious business. It means that we cannot run away, but we must lay down our lives for the sake of others. It calls us to commit ourselves to good deeds, such as caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, forgiving those who wrong us, loving others as God has loved us. These good deeds are the very "stuff" of our everyday living and loving, in our families and in our service to the poor.

Vincentian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: To those served, Vincentians are expected to give the same deep and serious thought that they give to their own blood family. Sharing does not consist merely in the distribution of material goods; it also implies that our personal resources and potential of mind and heart, of time and influence, are placed at the service of others. Sharing means taking part in the joys and sorrows, in the worries and the hopes of others. It equally involves a readiness, on the part of the members and the Society, to accept help, suggestions, advice, encouragement and collaboration. Sharing means being willing to be disturbed. It is a sign of the true spirit of charity to be ready to share ideas and to accept giving in on some of our own. We are all poor in one way or another. That is perhaps what draws us all closer to one another and to Him who consented to share our humanity. (US Manual, P.49)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How are we "Good Shepherds" to each other and to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to be "Good Shepherds,"

-strengthen us to be hope for others.

For those who live in loneliness,

-may they know the healing bond of friendship.

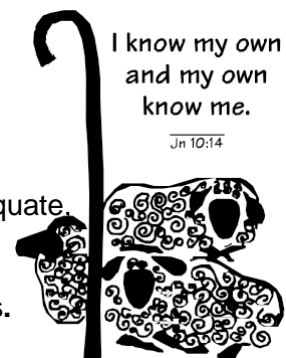
For those whose labor is burdensome and whose wages are inadequate,

-may they receive employment worthy of their dignity.

For the sick and the dying,

-may they know Christ's healing through all Vincentians.

Amen



FEAST OF SAINT GIANNA BERETTA MOLLA

April 28

Gospel: (John 20: 19-21)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "*Peace be with you.*" When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*"

Reflection:

Blessed Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Italy on October 4, 1922, the tenth of thirteen children. In March 1950, she obtained her degree in medicine and surgery from the University of Pavia, the same school where Blessed Frederic Ozanam's father had obtained his degree in medicine. It was during medical school that Gianna became an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Gianna made a pilgrimage to Lourdes seeking discernment in her vocation. Upon her return, she fell in love with Pietro Molla, and taking this as an answer to her prayers they were married on September 24, 1955. Gianna opened a clinic along with her brother Ferdinando, also a physician. The clinic was located in a small town of two thousand people, and she was especially generous to the poor sick, providing medicine and money for those in need.

Vincentian Meditation:

Gianna and Pietro had three children. Each pregnancy was a risk because of her fragile health. After a number of miscarriages, Gianna became pregnant with her fourth child. Toward the end of the second month she began to experience pain, and a fibrous tumor in the ovary was diagnosed. As a doctor, she knew the risk she was running. She kept her suffering to herself. On the way to the hospital on April 20, 1962, Gianna told her husband Pietro: "If they should ask which of the two lives they should save, do not hesitate...first, the life of the child." On April 21 she delivered a baby girl, but septic peritonitis set in, and she died on April 29, 1962. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and canonized on May 16, 2004, in the presence of her husband and four children. Saint Gianna has been called a "mother-martyr for the love of God and in obedience to his commandment." Gianna was a true Vincentian! (US Manual, P.188-190)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How can the Society celebrate and imitate its own Saint Gianna?

Closing Prayer: (Words of Gianna's son, Pierluigi, at her beatification)

"My mother knew how to live her earthly, daily existence with simplicity, balance and constant service, all in a beautiful harmony, first as a young student and professional person as a woman, then as wife and mother. Her generous commitment to and involvement in Catholic Action and to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, along with her joy of life, was crowned with her love of piano, painting, tennis, mountain climbing, skiing, the symphony, theatre and traveling."

Saint Gianna, intercede for us!



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 2, 2021

Gospel: (John 15:1-8)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing."*

Reflection:

What do we look like when we are pruned? Some pruning creates a new shape for fruitfulness—anything is taken away that does not lead us to Christ. We may end up a little misshapen—we don't act like others because we choose to be friendly and helpful to all without discrimination. We are allowing God's words to remain in us. The fruit we bear blossoms from the intimate relationship we have with the Risen One. Fruitfulness is never for our own sake, but always for that of others. This kind of fruitfulness is what glorifies God—bringing others into closer relationship with God. Self-giving love motivated by the sheer joy of the resurrection opens us to fruitful pruning. Part of our pruning is dying to our prejudices toward others and allowing them to grow in their relationship with the risen Christ. Their growth is also our growth, a deeper share in the resurrected life. (Living Liturgy, p.128)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual we read: For Frederic, Vincentians transcended racial and national prejudices. They judged women and men strictly on their need, not on their color, nationality, education, morality. Vincentians are non-judgmental. A non-judgmental attitude excludes assigning guilt or innocence, or judging a person's degree of responsibility for their needs or problems. St. Vincent appealed: "Deal with neighbors in a gentle, humble and loving manner, even with the most hardened of sinners, and never employ a vehement accusation or reproaches or harsh language toward anyone whomsoever." (US Manual, P.24-25)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Do we need pruning to become more non-judgmental, to let go of some prejudices?

Closing Prayer:

With grateful hearts we pray for the grace of pruning,

-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving.

For the poor we serve,

-Grant us the grace to be non-judgmental.

For the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

-Grant us the grace to live the spirit of Frederic and Vincent.

Amen



SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 9, 2021

Gospel: (John 15:9-17)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you....I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who choose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."*

Reflection:

The Gospel boils down to something really quite simple: Remain in Jesus' love... "Abide in me as I abide in you"...keep the commandments, love one another. Yes, the command is simple, but the demand is imposing: lay down our lives. Keeping God's commandments is laying down our lives—we surrender our will to doing God's will and in this is the dying. Caring for and reaching out to others is laying down our lives—also a dying. Doing little things every day, not because we have to but because we see the other as the beloved of God, is dying. We choose all these and other ways of dying because we know this is the cost of discipleship; this is why we need the gift of the Spirit; this is why we prepare for Pentecost. (Living Liturgy, p.132)

Vincentian Meditation:

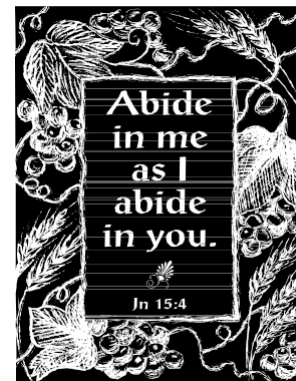
St. Vincent was a great inspiration to Frederic Ozanam in his life, work and writings. For Vincent, however, and for Frederic, it was the charity of Christ which pressed them on to do what they did for the poor of their time. It is a mystery how God could love mankind, disfigured by sin and infidelity. Likewise, it is a mystery of God that you, as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, are able to love people who are disfigured by the effects of poverty and injustice, and who are often so unattractive in their poverty. As you work for and visit the poor, take heart from the thought that you are reflecting into this dark world the light and the love of God. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.68)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you seen Vincentians reflecting the love and light of Christ into this dark world?

Closing Prayer:

Lord we pray for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
-Grant us the grace to reflect the light and love of God.
Lord we pray for all Vincentians in the world,
-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving. Amen



FEAST OF ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC

May 9

Gospel: (Matthew 25: 31-46)

The King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me...I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."

Reflection:

Louise de Marillac, (1591-1660), married Antoine LeGras and they had a son whom they named Michel, but at the age of 34 she became a widow. Vincent de Paul became her spiritual director and under his guidance she began caring for the poor and visiting the Confraternities of Charity. Vincent and Louise co-founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and dedicated them to serve the poor with humility, simplicity and charity. In 1960, Pope John XXIII proclaimed Louise the patron saint of all Christian social workers.

Vincentian Meditation:

Louise de Marillac said: "Above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care." (Gibson and Kneaves, *Praying with Louise*, p.. 72)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

In what ways do you see your Conference serving the poor today in the spirit of Louise: in gentleness... loving them tenderly and respecting them deeply?

Closing Prayer:

Compassionate Christ, Louise ministered to the needs of your people,
-give us courage to walk in her footsteps.

You inspired Louise with a great love for the poor and the abandoned,
-grant us the grace to serve with the same spirit of love.

You inspired Louise with compassion for the destitute and sorrowful,
-may we love them tenderly and respect them deeply.

May the Vincentian Family continue to grow throughout the world,
-so that the poor will know God's love in a tangible way.
Amen



THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 16, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 16:15-20)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature... These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

Reflection:

Jesus expects his disciples to walk in his footsteps. But Jesus always *invites* us to share in his ministry, never forces us. At the Ascension, Jesus *commissioned his disciples* to proclaim the gospel. At first this might seem an impossible commission: how can we expect to fill Jesus' footsteps? On our own authority we cannot preach the gospel, *we can* fill Jesus' footsteps only when we hear "the instructions given through the Spirit." What an awesome honor it is to be disciples of Christ – by returning to his rightful place at the hand of God, Jesus *entrusts* his mission to us. (Living Liturgy, p.136)

Vincentian Meditation:

The motto of the Society states that: "**No work of charity is foreign to the Society.**" And so in the Manual we read: Accordingly, the possibilities for Vincentian action are almost without limit. Being poor does not always, or necessarily, consist of being short of material goods. Being poor can also mean being physically and mentally handicapped, sick, crippled, old, ugly, or illiterate. There are poor who are or are made to feel alone...immigrants, transients, orphans, the abandoned or rejected, and all those who find themselves among others who are indifferent or hostile. Being poor may mean wanting to cry when others are laughing; being physically or morally chained, as prisoners, shut-ins, alcoholics, drug addicts; being defenseless against attacks, insults or accusations; being an innocent victim of crime or quarrels. The more the Society grows, the more it will reach the lonely and troubled who have need for care and friendship. (US Manual, P.45-46)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How are we being called to carry the mission of Jesus in new ways, meeting new needs or creating new works of charity?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus is ever present with God, and ever present with us, and so we pray,

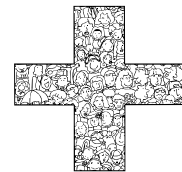
-Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth.

We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,

-may we seek to speak your word and your healing presence.

We ask for the grace to live our motto "No work of charity is foreign to the Society",

-may we be aware of the poorest among us and seek to assist them. Amen.



Go into all the world and proclaim
the good news!
Mk 16:15

PENTECOST

May 23, 2021

Gospel: (John 15: 26-27; 16:12-15)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify because you have been with me from the beginning. I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth."*

Reflection:

Jesus tells us that he is sending the Spirit to us. The Spirit is the Word speaking to us in a most profound way because he dwells with us and guides us to all truth. This Spirit is all we need, provided we allow the Spirit to speak through us and not turn God's word into *our* word. Openness to the Spirit within is our guarantee that what we speak as disciples is spoken in Jesus' name. This Pentecost commemoration isn't simply recalling a past event but celebrating what God is doing with us now. In baptism each of us received the Spirit; that was our Pentecost. The Spirit dwells within us so we can be faithful and true disciples. The indwelling of the Spirit is a continual Pentecost! (Living Liturgy, p.144)

Vincenian Meditation:

While at times one can hear the Spirit speak even in a noisy crowd, it is often only in silence that one hears the deepest voice, that one plumbs the depth of meaning. It is only when what is heard is pondered, that its full meaning is revealed. The quest for truth, therefore, involves prayerfulness and reflectiveness. Jesus turned to his Father again and again in prayer to listen to him and to seek his will. Prayer is then surely one of the privileged ways of listening. But it must always be validated by life. One who listens to "what the Spirit is telling me" in prayer, but who pays little heed to what others are saying in daily life is surely suspect. Prayer must be in contact with people and events, since God speaks not only in the silence of our hearts, but also (and often first of all) in the people around us. (Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, p.24)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you listened to the Holy Spirit through people and events?

Closing Prayer:

Seeking the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pray,

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That the winds of Pentecost may move us to deeds of peace and justice

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That the fire of Pentecost may breathe new hope into the hopeless,

-Come, Holy Spirit.

That we may listen in the silence of our heart to people and events

-Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

May 30, 2021

Gospel: (Matthew 28: 16-20)

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, *"All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."*

Reflection:

St. Vincent de Paul urged his followers to worship and to imitate the Trinity, and to live a life in which all are one, as Jesus is one with the Father and the Spirit. He wanted his followers to have in themselves the image of the Trinity, to share a sacred relation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. St. Vincent wanted us to be together as having but one heart and soul so that through this union of spirit we would be a true image of the unity of God. He prayed to the Holy Spirit, who is the union of the Father and Son, that he would likewise be ours, giving profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties. (Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, p.34)

Vincenian Meditation:

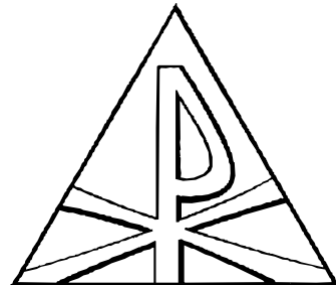
In the Manual of the Society we read: Conferences meet regularly and frequently, as a celebration of mutual friendship and out of a passion to serve the Lord. Unlike other organizations within and without the Church, the Conference meets less to conduct business than *to celebrate and deepen its unity* for essentially spiritual reasons. It is in the Conference meetings that members can experience Christ's presence in each other and the workings of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, these gatherings become a living, vivid witness of God's healing presence among us. These *unity-building* occasions constitute opportunities for personal renewal and for rededication to service of the needy and suffering. (US Manual, P.95-96)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Do we model the unity of the Trinity, "being of one mind and one heart," in our Conferences?

Closing Prayer:

O Holy Trinity, truly you are a God of Unity,
-give us one heart and one soul.
Truly you are a God of mystery,
-give us hearts filled with reverence for You.
Truly you are a God of majesty,
-give us hearts filled with humility and love.
Truly you are a God of creative power,
-give us hearts filled with gratitude. Amen.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 6, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26)

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, gave it to them, and said, *"Take it; this is my body."* Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, *"This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."* Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Reflection:

Jesus' identity as the suffering servant who obtained redemption for us "with his own blood" is truly the same as his mission – to give of himself without counting the cost, even if its cost is his very body and blood. Self-giving unites identity and mission into the same reality. This solemnity brings us once again to Jesus' self-giving on the cross and to continue self-giving in the Eucharist, and challenges us to take up Jesus' mission of self-giving. The Eucharist is the centerpiece of our lives, challenging us: our identity is our mission – self-giving.

Vincentian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: The Eucharist plays a major role in Vincentian spirituality. This is seen in the lives of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic. Vincent spent one hour each morning before the Blessed Sacrament before celebrating Mass. He would frequently make short visits to the chapel before leaving and upon returning from his responsibilities. Frederic attended Mass daily whenever possible. And a day did not go by, when Frederic would make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one of the churches in Paris as he made his way to an appointment. Both Vincent and Frederic discovered what the Church teaches today: the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life; it augmented their union with Jesus, strengthened their charity and committed them to the poor. (US Manual, P.31-32)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How can you make the Eucharist play a prominent place in your life, as it did in Frederic and Vincent's?

Closing Prayer:

Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a sign of love,
-may the poor and outcasts find a place at your table.
Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a sign of unity,
-may we embrace diversity with reverence and open hearts.
Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a bond of charity,
-may we be living signs of your presence in our midst.
Christ Jesus, your Eucharist is a pledge of future glory,
-may you welcome home all who have died believing in you.
Amen.



FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

June 11, 2021

Gospel: John 19:31-37

Since it was the preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled: *Not a bone of it will be broken*. And again another passage says: *They will look upon him whom they have pierced*.

Reflection:

The Litany of the Sacred Heart contains language that reminds us of the real demand of discipleship: "Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love...of Whose fullness we have all received...patient and most merciful...obedient unto death...our life and resurrection." We have received fullness of life from God through the death and resurrection of Jesus; now we must be abodes of justice and love, patient and merciful, obedient even unto death. Although this solemnity speaks of God's great tenderness in loving us, even this has its demand. It is God's tenderness that encourages us to have our own hearts pierced so that others might receive the fullness of life through us. We can do this because God loved us first. (Living Liturgy, p.160)

Vincentian Meditation:

What is the Vincentian call about? It's about three basic questions:

- Do we see the face of Christ in everyone we serve?
- Were we the good news of Jesus Christ to each person served?
- Most importantly, did every person that we served see Jesus in each of us?

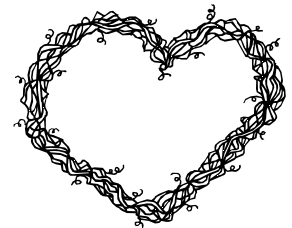
This is what our Vincentian call is all about. It is what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is all about. It is what Vincentian spirituality is all about. (Eugene Smith, National President)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How does devotion to the Sacred Heart help us to live out our Vincentian call?

Closing Prayer

O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
 -give us the grace to be compassionate servants of the poor.
O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
 -give us the grace to be abodes of justice and love.
O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
 -give us the grace to be patient and merciful. Amen



ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 13, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 4: 26-34)

Jesus said to the crowd: This is how it is with the reign of God. A man scatters seed on the ground. He goes to bed and gets up day after day. Through it all the seed sprouts and grows without his knowing how it happens. The soil produces of itself first the blade, then the ear. When the crop is ready he 'wields the sickle, for the time is ripe for harvest."

Reflection:

Have you ever noticed how many parables of Our Lord center on the image of the growth of small seeds? These parables underline for us the need of patience. These parables of growth underline for us the point that we should not look for immediate results and that harvests do not ripen quickly. In this age of instant results, it is difficult for us to be patient with the slow growth of our work. We must live with the conviction that it is one person who sows and another who reaps. Be content to think of yourself as a person who sows. If we, by the grace of God, gladly do some careful sowing now, God will give the increase in his good time. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 70-71)

Vincenian Meditation:

St. Vincent de Paul was a great inspiration to Frederic Ozanam in his life, work and writings. For Vincent, however, and for Frederic, it was the charity of Christ which pressed them on to do what they did for the poor of their time. It is a mystery how God could love mankind, disfigured by sin and infidelity. Likewise, it is a mystery of God that you, as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, are able to love people who are often so unattractive in their poverty. As you work for and visit the poor, take heart from the thought that you are reflecting into this dark world the light and love of God. St. Vincent told us: "I should not consider a poor peasant or a poor woman according to their exterior, nor according to what seems to be the extent of their intelligence; for often they do not seem to have either the face or the mind of reasonable persons, so gross and earthly are they. But turn the medal and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, who wished to be poor, is represented to us by these poor..." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 68-69)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you learned to "turn the medal" to find the face of Christ in the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, be with us as we help the poor,

teach us how to be patient.

Jesus, be with us as we sow seeds of our works,

teach us how to trust in you.

Jesus, be with us in our service to our suffering brothers and sisters,

teach us to "turn the medal" to find you in the poor. Amen



TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 20, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 4: 35-41)

One day as evening drew on Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us cross over to the farther shore." Leaving the crowd, they took him away in the boat in which he was sitting, while the other boats accompanied him. It happened that a bad squall blew up. The waves were breaking over the boat and it began to ship water badly. Jesus was in the stern through it all, sound asleep on a cushion. They finally woke him and said to him, "Teacher, doesn't it matter to you that we are going to drown?" He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "*Quiet, Be still!*" The wind fell off and everything grew calm. Then he said to them: "*Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith?*" A great awe overcame them at this. They kept saying to one another, "Who can this be that the wind and the sea obey him?"

Reflection:

Jesus asks the question, "Why are you terrified?" It would seem rather obvious—a violent squall came up and the waves were breaking over the boat. These men were fishermen; they knew the perils of the sea. What they hadn't learned fully yet was who Jesus is—the One whose presence, in the midst of peril, we recognize and trust. The faith to which Jesus calls the disciples is that Jesus does care. He responds to their terror and delivers them. Jesus' care is ever with us because he is always present to us. The challenge during our Christian journey is to believe in his presence and to trust in his care. (Living Liturgy, p. 158)

Vincentian Meditation:

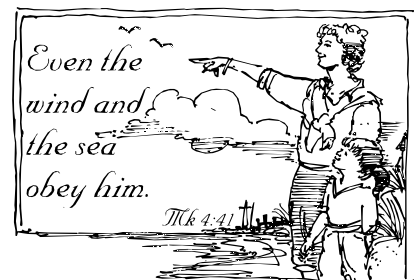
"Quiet, Be Still!" If we could absorb the spirituality of that single line of the gospel, there would be much more peace in our lives. We spend so much time fretting about the future because we have not learned to "be still"...to wait on the Lord. "Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith?" During the storms of our lives we must learn to patiently wait for the Lord. St. Vincent's insistence on the wisdom of making decisions slowly and of not anticipating the Providence of God was the fruit of knowing how to wait on the Lord...how to listen, how to be "quiet and still." The grace of waiting on the Lord, and acting only when we have clear signs of the direction that He wants us to take, can bring much peace and serenity to our souls. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 182)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts after a moment of silence*)

How have you learned to be "quite and still" and wait on the Lord?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, be with us in our journey,
Teach us to how to be quiet and to be still.
Jesus, be with us when we are afraid,
Teach us how to trust in your care.
Jesus, be with us as we make decisions,
Teach us the wisdom of trusting in your Providence. Amen



FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

June 24

Gospel: (Lk 1:57-66, 80)

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking the father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

Reflection:

The birth of John the Baptist on June 24 comes three months after the celebration on March 25 of the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel told Our Lady that her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and six months before the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus. The purpose of these Feasts is not to celebrate the exact dates of these events, but simply to commemorate them in an interlinking way. Celebrating the birth of John the Baptist is a feast that is relevant to all of us today. When Mary the mother of Jesus journeyed to visit Elizabeth, the baby "leapt" in Elizabeth's womb at the greeting of Mary. Just like John, we would do well to "leap" with joy in announcing Jesus to all those we encounter in our world. We can do this in everything we do—not just by words, but by actions which proclaim our Lord to others.

Vincentian Meditation:

If we are to rejoice in the grace of God—and the grace of God is given to us in order to "leap for joy"—we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart...to have a capacity for wonder. But there can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the poor, but our service must come from a heart that knows how to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. To dig continually a well of silence in our lives is to have assurance that God's grace will keep springing up, especially when we need it to help the needy who thirst for God's grace and kindness, and seek it from our hands and lips and hearts. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 55-56)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In your service to the poor, when have you marveled at the grace of God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, give us the grace to "leap for joy" like John the Baptist

as we announce you to all those we serve.

To all those who thirst for your grace and kindness,

may they find it in our hands, our lips and our hearts. Amen



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 27, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 5: 21-43)

When Jesus had crossed back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in the boat, a large crowd gathered around him and he stayed close to the lake. One of the officials of the synagogue, a man named Jairus, came near. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and made this earnest appeal: "My little daughter is critically ill. Please come and lay your hands on her so that she may get well and live." Jesus took the child's father and mother and his own companions and entered the room where the child lay. Taking her hand he said to her, "*Talitha, koum*," which means, "Little girl, get up." The girl, a child of twelve, stood up immediately and began to walk around. At this the family's astonishment was complete. He enjoined them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Reflection:

Just as Jairus overcame his fears in order to encounter Jesus and receive life, so we must surrender our own wills in order to encounter Jesus and receive life. Living the paschal mystery is none other than our daily dying to self—overcoming our fears and reaching out to Jesus in humility—in all the little, practical ways that fill our daily routines. Paschal mystery dying is as simple as smiling at the children even when we're bone tired or taking an hour out of our day to visit the sick. When we surrender in humility to his goodness and power, Jesus offers us life and in this we encounter the Lord of life. (Living Liturgy, p.164)

Vincenian Meditation:

If St. Vincent de Paul was able to do so much for the poor of his day, it was because with his mind and heart he had come to know something of the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God that is in the heart of Jesus. As children of God, we must constantly be convincing ourselves in prayer of the excessive love with which God has reached out and is still reaching out to us each day and each moment of the day. If we are not convinced that God loves us as we are, even with our frailties, it will be very difficult for us to show the love of God to the poor. It is the work of humble prayer to come to know oneself as a person who is loved by God. It is the work of humble prayer to share that experience with the poor and to convince them that God cares for them. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p292)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you come to know that you are loved by God?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, give us the humility to know that you love us,

-and to trust that you will answer our prayers.

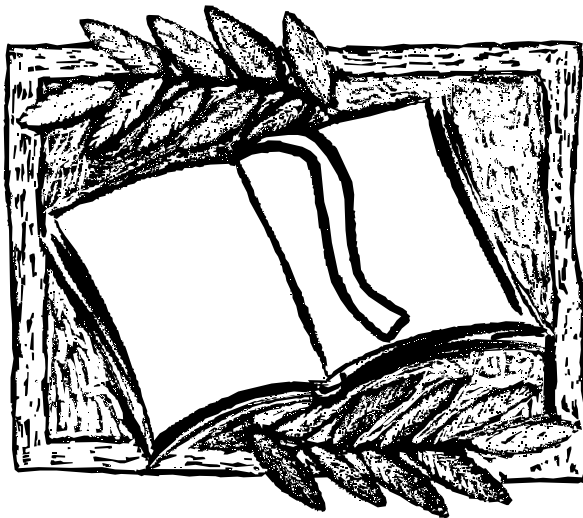
Jesus, give us the grace to share our faith in you with the poor,

-and to convince them that you care for them. Amen



VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Third Quarter 2021



Liturgical Year: B

(April—May—June 2021)

Available on SVdPUSA.org



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle B

Third Quarter-2021

JULY

July	4	<i>Feast of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati</i>
July	4	Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July	11	Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July	18	Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July	25	Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

AUGUST

August	1	Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August	8	Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August	15	<i>Feast of the Assumption</i>
August	22	Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
August	29	Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

SEPTEMBER

September	5	Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
September	8	<i>Feast of the Nativity of Mary</i>
September	9	<i>Feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam</i>
September	12	Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September	19	Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September	26	Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September	27	<i>Feast of St. Vincent de Paul</i>

FEAST OF BLESSED PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI

July 4

Gospel: (Matthew 11: 25-30)

Jesus exclaimed: *"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. ...Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves"*.

Reflection:

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati was born in 1901 in Italy, and his mother taught him verses from the Gospels. Pier Giorgio was deeply moved by them and developed an exceptional relationship with God. Indeed, God reveals his love to "little ones." From the time he was twelve until his death at twenty-four Pier Giorgio received Holy Communion daily. At 17, he joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and committed himself to serving the poor. Pier Giorgio said: "Jesus visits me every morning in Holy Communion. I repay him with my poor means, visiting the poor." When asked how he could stand the bad odors and dirt of the poor, he answered: "Don't forget that even if the house you visit is very dirty, there you may find Jesus." The last months of his life were filled with suffering, he contracted poliomyelitis and became paralyzed. When he died, hundreds came to view his body and there was a line of unknown faces who loved this good and generous young man who always had a good smile for everyone. Pier Giorgio was beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 20, 1990. (Manual for the Society, p. 94-95)

Vincenian Meditation:

Frederic Ozanam wrote: "Help then becomes honorable, because it may become mutual, because every man who gives a kind word, a good advice, a consolation today, may tomorrow stand himself in need of a kind word, an advice, or a consolation; because the hand that you clasp clasps yours in return; because that indigent family whom you love loves you in return, and will have largely acquitted themselves toward you when the old man, the mother, the little children shall have prayed for you." (Ramson, Praying with Frederic, p. 93)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence.)

How have you found your service "honorable because it was mutual?" Give thanks for all of the "unknown faces" who pray for you.

Closing Prayer:

Inspired by Frederic and Pier Giorgio, we know that:
When we encounter the brokenness of the poor,

-Jesus will be our strength.

When the burdens of ministry overwhelm us,

-Jesus will be our strength.

When we proclaim the Gospel to the abandoned,

-Jesus will be our strength.

Amen



*In the
one Spirit
we were
all
baptized
into one
body.*

1 Cor 13:13

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 4, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 6: 1-6)

Jesus went to his own part of the country followed by his disciples. When the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue in a way that kept his audience amazed. They said: "Where did he get all this? What kind of wisdom is he endowed with? How is it that such miraculous deeds are accomplished by his hands? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, a brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon. Aren't his sisters our neighbors here?" They found him too much for them. Jesus' response to all this was: "*No prophet is without honor except in his native place, among his own kindred, and in his own house.*" He could work no miracle there, apart from curing a few who were sick by laying hands on them, so much did their lack of faith distress him. He made the rounds of the neighboring villages instead, and spent his time teaching.

Reflection:

"Where did this man get all this?" They saw but they didn't believe. The challenge of this gospel is to look beyond our own knowledge of others preconditioned by what we think we know about them and listen to them, allow them to teach us about God and how to be faith-filled disciples. God does not very often visit us in the unusual and spectacular, hitting us over the head so that we don't miss God's message of salvation. Most often God visits us in the ordinary circumstances of our own lives through ordinary people we meet who are faithful as Jesus was to their own mission to make known the gospel. It is too easy to dismiss the events of this gospel reading as past history. After all, we like to think, if we had been there and seen those mighty deeds, we would have believed. Really? (Living Liturgy, p.168)

Vincentian Meditation:

Had we but eyes of faith, we would see that each day we are being surprised by joy. We have come to take so much that is good in life for granted. Is not your call to serve the poor a surprise, seeing that so many others are so imprisoned in themselves that their hearts remain untouched by the sufferings of the poor whom you are serving? Your unselfish service of the poor is for the poor themselves a surprise. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 378)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How has God visited you in the ordinary circumstances of your life?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, give us the grace to find you in the ordinary circumstances of life,

-as we learn to trust in you.

Teach us to find all the ways that you surprise us by joy,

-as we learn to have faith in you.

Teach us to be grateful for being called to serve the poor,

-as we learn to love unselfishly with you. Amen



FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 11, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 6: 7-13)

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two...He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. He said to them, “*Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you, leave there and shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them.*” So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Reflection:

Jesus sends the apostles out on mission, two by two. His instructions indicate that they are to stay focused on what they are to do. Everything they would do originates in Jesus and the power to stay focused on the mission and be successful comes only from Jesus who sent them. When disciples are sent on mission it is to take up the mission of Jesus, and there is only one mission, to establish God’s reign. Like Jesus, disciples will meet resistance, but they will also meet success when they encounter those with faith. It is an awesome thought that Jesus entrusts his mission to us. With our own power and talent, we can do little; with the authority with which Jesus invests his disciples we can do much. (Living Liturgy, p.170)

Vincentian Meditation:

The Manual of the Society states: From the beginning of the Society, the central and most basic activity of Conferences has been the visitation of the needy in the home. This action is the clearest symbol of the Vincentian charism which dictates the highest respect for the dignity of the poor...It symbolizes the fact that Vincentians are to reach out to the needy... and it is in the home environment that needy persons feel most free to entrust their stories of struggle to the helper. It is there, in the family setting, that Vincentians are asked to listen, offer humble advice, and render assistance. A related tradition is that Vincentians always visit in pairs: “two by two”. This requirement is based on the fact that the Conference is a community, not a collection of individuals who “do their own thing.” (US Manual, P.98)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In your home visits, how have you felt like the apostles going “two by two”—being sent to carry the mission of Jesus to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, as we go together on home visits,

-walk with us.

Teach us to do what is right and just,

-and to speak the truth with courage.

Teach us to embrace the stranger,

-and to recognize the face of Christ.

Teach us to serve the poor with love,

-and to treasure each other in our Conference. Amen



SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 18, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 6:30-34)

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, *"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."* People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place.

Reflection:

Last Sunday Jesus sent his apostles on mission; this Sunday they face the harsh reality that the mission will wear them out. The exhaustion can come from the good work and the "great numbers" of people who need help. The needs are great, and it can be exhausting to try to meet them. Whatever the cause of being worn out, Jesus is there to listen, support, and invite us to rest a bit. If we let Jesus gather us in, he will take care of us. We all need to go off to a "deserted place" occasionally to "rest awhile." Whether this means taking some time alone each day to pray and rest in God, making Sunday truly a day of rest, or setting aside a few days a year to make a retreat, all of us need time to regain our strength so we can take up our own shepherding tasks. If the mission overwhelms us we will be unable to persevere. Living faithful to the mission Jesus has given us requires that we balance action and contemplation. (Living Liturgy, p.174)

Vincentian Meditation:

Vincent de Paul, a great man of action was also a contemplative, caught up in God and consumed by his love. His contemplation of God's love overflowed into practical love for the poor. He encourages his followers: "Let us all give ourselves completely to the practice of prayer, since it is by it that all good things come to us. If we persevere, it is thanks to prayer. If we succeed in our employments, it is thanks to prayer. If we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer. If we remain in charity and if we are saved, all that happens is thanks to God and thanks to prayer. Just as God refuses nothing to prayer, so also He grants almost nothing without prayer." (Maloney, He Hears the Cry of the Poor, p. 98)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

As a Vincentian, how can you become more like a "contemplative in action?"

Closing Prayer:

Lord, give us the grace to become "contemplatives in action"

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those whom we have served this week,

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those who labor for unjust wages,

-Let our prayer rise before you.

For all those who have no work,

-Let our prayer rise before you. Amen



Come
to me
and I
will
give
you
rest.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 25, 2021

Gospel: (John 6:1-15)

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples...When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "*Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?*"... One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "*Have the people recline.*" So they reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had their fill, he said to his disciples, "*Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.*"

Reflection:

The multiplication account has more to do with what Jesus was saying about the future than about feeding a hungry crowd. The abundance is a sign of the resurrected life and points to a time of fulfillment when God's plan for redemption is finally realized. The bread grain is specified as barley, the grain used by the poor; in the messianic reign the poor will share in God's abundance. Jesus supersedes both the apostles' and the crowd's expectations: with little he feeds many...Jesus is the sign of God's lavish presence and love. We Christians are to see our lives through the lens of God's extravagant love. Do we? (Living Liturgy, p.178)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the Manual for the Society we read: For Vincent and Frederic, there is only one love. The love of God and the love of the neighbor are one and the same love. It is our love in response to God's love for us. Since the loving God cannot be seen but must be experienced through loving people, it follows that one who sees others without loving cannot love or even know God. For Vincent and Frederic, as for Jesus, love is neither sentiment, nor affection, nor theory, but a practical willing of another's best interests and a consequent striving to advance those interests. Vincentians are about loving. Love is a verb, not a noun. Vincentians are concerned with the practice and exercise of the virtue of charity...loving God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (US Manual, P.26)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Who are the "loving people" in your life in whom you have experienced the love of God?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, draw our hearts away from selfishness,

- turn our lives to loving service.

Lord, may we bring the bread of hope to the poor,

-teach us to serve you in those who suffer.

Lord, may we come to know the abundance of your love,

-give us compassionate hearts. Amen



EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 1, 2021

Gospel: (John 6:24-35)

Jesus said *"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."* So they said to him, *"What can we do to accomplish the works of God?"* Jesus answered, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." ... "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."*

Reflection:

If Jesus is the bread from heaven given for us and we are the body of Christ, then we must conclude that we ourselves are to be bread from heaven that fosters eternal life for others. Jesus gives himself as bread from heaven. We give ourselves to others, as bread from heaven, when we confirm our belief by means of the everyday actions we do. Treating another as the body of Christ is believing. Taking time to be in touch with our spiritual needs is believing. Reaching out in compassion to others is believing. Self-giving is believing. (Living Liturgy, p.182)

Vincentian Meditation:

In your ministry, as St. Vincent says, first do and then teach. As a follower of Christ, a servant of the poor, you will touch the hearts of God's people especially when you give vibrant witness:

- through the language of works, performing the works of justice and mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, helping to find the cause of their hunger and thirst and the ways of alleviating them;
- through the language of words, announcing with deep conviction the Lord's presence, his love, his offer of forgiveness and acceptance to all;
- through the language of relationships, being *with* the poor, working *with* them, forming a community that shows the Lord's love for all. (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p165)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do we give ourselves to others as bread from heaven ...in works, words and relationships?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, set our hearts on fire with compassion for the poor,
-so that we may witness to your love through our works.
Lord, fill us with your love and forgiveness,
-so that we may give ourselves to others as bread from heaven.
Lord, give us the grace to create communities of faith,
-so that we may *be with* and *work with* those who are poor.
Amen



*Whoever
comes to me
will never
be hungry.*

Jn 6:35

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 8, 2021

Gospel: (John 6:44-51)

Jesus said: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life....I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."*

Reflection:

How many times does Jesus have to teach the same message before the crowd gets it? With such a great gift offered—bread from heaven that brings eternal life—we would think that the crowd would put their problems with belief aside and receive anyway, for the gift far exceeds the cost of belief. But... the bread of heaven isn't without its cost. For Jesus, the cost is the cross. The bread of life is the bread of self-sacrifice. Here is the crux of the problem and here is the giant step forward in this gospel: to eat the bread of life is to eat the bread of suffering. To encounter Jesus by eating the bread of life is to take upon ourselves Jesus' life of self-giving. But unlike the crowd who simply didn't understand, we are able to believe: because Jesus has gone before us and taught us that death leads to life. The Cross leads to Resurrection! (Living Liturgy, p.186)

Vincenian Meditation:

Nothing will nourish us more than focusing on God's love, of which the cross is the symbol. The love that Jesus reveals through the symbol of the cross is: self-giving, sacrificial, forgiving, healing, unifying, loyal to one's friends, powerless, in solidarity with the weak, confident in the power of God. As Vincentians, frequent meditation on the cross, as the symbol of God's love for us and of our love of God, has abiding importance. Jesus' dying love gives meaning to the many "crosses" his followers are called to bear. The following of the crucified Lord is the supreme act of faith; it is a surrender in hope and love into the incomprehensible mystery of God. (Maloney, He Hears the Cry of the Poor, p. 45-46)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways have you found that indeed, the cross leads to resurrection!

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, through your cross and resurrection,

-fill us with your peace!

For the grace to eat the bread of life and the bread of suffering,

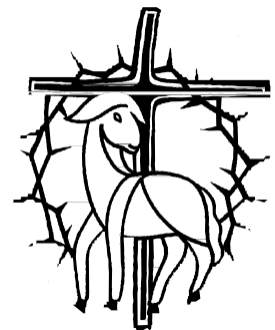
-fill us with your strength!

For the grace to accept the crosses in our lives,

-fill us with your love!

For the grace to be witnesses to your resurrection,

-fill us with your joy! Amen



ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

August 15, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 1:39-56)

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Reflection:

Mary's "yes" unleashed a unique relationship with Jesus. This is why all generations will call her blessed: without knowing how and why, she believed that God would raise her up to be the Mother of God. For nine months she would nurture in her womb the Life that would bring life to all. For nine months she would give her body so that the Bread of Life might be born. Mary is blessed because she believed in God's word. Mary is blessed because her body gave life to the Word incarnate. This is why we believe that her body is assumed into heaven: hers was a blessed body. Body and soul, she was assumed into heaven to enjoy eternal life with the divine Word, her Son. And, this because she believed and trusted in God! (Living Liturgy, p.190)

Vincentian Meditation:

Mary is the ideal disciple, the model listener. She hears God's word and acts on it. Mary, as the Listening Disciple, lies at the core of New Testament spirituality: all disciples, like Mary, are called to listen to the word of God attentively and act on it. There is almost nothing more important that Mary can teach us than to learn to listen. At root, being a disciple means being a hearer of the word. The whole of Christian life can be summed up in the phrase: "She listened to the word of God and acted on it." (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p.110-111)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How can we better live our Vincentian devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Mary responded with joyful faith to your call,

-Lord, open our hearts to do your will.

Mary listened to the Word of God and acted on it,

-Lord, grant us the grace to follow her example.

Mary assumed into heaven, you are the Mother of the Church

-Mary, full of grace, pray for us. Amen



TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 22, 2021

Gospel: (John 6: 60-69)

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?"... Jesus said, *"It is the Spirit that gives life...the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."* Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, *"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."* As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, *"Do you also want to leave?"* Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy one of God."

Reflection:

Believing in Jesus and his teaching requires letting go of what we think we know of God and allowing God to act in a whole new way. Israel's expectations of who the Messiah would be blocked the way for some to see God acting in a new way and offering a whole new way of relating to us. Never before had Israel heard of a God who becomes incarnate and dwells among the people. Believe or leave is a pretty clear choice. Many of us make the choice to stay with Jesus but live the new, self-giving life only halfheartedly. Liturgy invites us to constantly assess the depth of our belief-commitment. We judge our belief not on what we say or think but on what we do. Self-giving always leads to new life and this is why we are able to make the choice to stay with the Master, for we have come to know and believe that he has the words of eternal life. (Living Liturgy, p.196)

Vincentian Meditation:

In prayer, the emphasis must always be on the presence of the personal God, to whose word we must listen attentively, as he speaks to us the good news of his love for us and for others. In an era when there is much noise, where the media, if we so choose, speak to us all day long, we must ask ourselves: Are we able to distinguish the voice of God among the many voices that are speaking? Is God's word able to say "new things" to us? Are we still capable of wonder? The word "wonder" has a kinship with the word wound. Is the word of God able to wound us, to penetrate the membrane that seals us off, that encloses us within ourselves? Can it break into our consciousness and change us? (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p.24)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How is the Holy Spirit calling us to change- to become "new"?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus is ever present with God, and ever present with us, and so we pray,
-Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,
-and may we always let your word break into our consciousness and change us. Amen.



TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 29, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 7: 1-8)

Jesus summoned the crowd again and said to them, *"Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile. From within people, from their hearts come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder; adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."*

Reflection:

It's easier to clean the pots and pans than to clean one's heart! It's also easy to dismiss this gospel because our tradition has never emphasized this kind of ritual impurity. Yet, the gospel hits home closer than we may think. What traditions do we blindly cling to? Perhaps it is enough for us just to go to Mass on Sunday; after all, this is what most of us grew up doing. Or perhaps we cling to rote prayers that we learned as a child rather than stretch our relationship with God to find new prayer expressions. Perhaps we relegate God in our lives to an hour on Sunday. Do we keep the letter of the law and miss entirely the spirit of the law? Interior righteousness means a heart turned to God. We need to look at the way we live, and this will tell us whether we have hearts truly turned toward God, all of the time. Purity of heart is expressed in righteous living: self-giving for the sake of others. This is how we have life. (Living Liturgy, p.200)

Vincentian Meditation:

For St. Vincent, simplicity consisted in referring things to God alone, or purity of intention. In this sense simplicity is doing everything for love of God and for no other end. It entails avoiding "human respect" or doing things merely to look good in the eyes of others. Simplicity is speaking the truth. It is saying things as they are, without concealing or hiding anything. The heart must not think one thing while the mouth says another. Vincentians must avoid all duplicity, dissimulation, cunning, and double meaning. (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p.144-145)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How do we live our core value of Simplicity in the spirit of St. Vincent?

Closing Prayer:

Through Christ, the merciful Servant,

-give us interior righteousness and a heart turned to God.

Through Christ, the Healer,

-give us the grace to always speak the truth.

Through Christ, the Holy One,

-give us the grace to avoid all duplicity, cunning and double meaning. Amen.



TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
September 5, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 7: 31-37)

Jesus left the district of Tyre and returned by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Ten Cities. Some people brought him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. Jesus took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and emitted a groan. He said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" that is, "*Be Opened.*" At once the man's ears were opened; he was freed from the impediment, and began to speak plainly. Then he enjoined them strictly not to tell anyone; but the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. Their amazement went beyond all bounds: "He has done everything well! He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Reflection:

In living the gospel, rather than simply bringing others to Jesus *we ourselves* are the presence of the risen Christ who bring healing and salvation. If we are to be the embodiment of God's saving power then we must open our ears to hear and recognize all the everyday opportunities for making God's presence and reign known. This might be something so simple as turning off the TV and spending some time in the family listening to each other. Or it might be something so demanding as choosing to work fewer hours, and have less money available, in order to be more present to others. However we respond to other's needs, it is helpful to remember that we do embody God's offer of salvation through the good we do. (Living Liturgy, p.206)

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent tells us that humility is a grace of our Lord Jesus. Humility only comes when the light of Jesus penetrates deeply into our being and into all our thinking and reflection. When that light does penetrate into us, it transfigures everything, not only our opinion about ourselves but our attitude towards others. With humility God will be glorified, the poor will be served and made happy, and we ourselves will enjoy the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, who is gentle and humble of heart. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.586)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you brought healing and have been the "presence of Christ" to others?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, as you opened the ears of the deaf man,
 -open our ears to hear the cries of the poor.
Jesus, as you removed the speech impediment of the deaf man.
 -give us the grace to speak of your love to others.
Jesus, let your light penetrate into us,
 **-transfiguring our opinion about ourselves and our attitude
towards others. Amen**



FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF MARY

September 8

Gospel: (Matthew 1: 18-32)

Suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said: "Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." All this happened to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel."

Reflection:

Frederic Ozanam died on the feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, 1853. It seems fitting for this man to die on the feast of a woman to whom he had been greatly devoted all his life. Devotion to Mary, the mother of God, was part of Frederic Ozanam's life from childhood to death. He sought her intercession often. Kneeling at her altar, he prayed, "I place my intentions under the auspices of our Divine Mother..." Frederic believed in the power of Mary, the Mother of God. He often prayed to her for himself and for others. He believed in the power of Mary's intercession with her divine offspring. Devotion to her was woven into the various stages of Frederic's life and especially prominent in the poetic devotion of youth, the moral challenges of young adulthood, the transformation of becoming a parent, and the acceptance of suffering and death. Frederic invites us to consider our own devotion to Mary and our trust in her intercession. (Ramson, *Praying with Frederic*, p.68, 71)

Vincenian Meditation:

"I am entirely yours, most Holy Virgin, that I may more perfectly belong to God. Teach me, therefore, to imitate your holy life by fulfilling the designs of God in my life. I very humbly beg you to assist me."-St. Louise de Marillac- (Gibson and Kneaves, *Praying with Louise*, p. 91)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Have you ever felt the power of Mary, the mother of God, in your life? Do you need to ask her intercession for a significant situation now?

Closing Prayer:

O God, as we celebrate the birth of Mary,
-**we ask for the grace to trust in her intercession.**
Through Mary, source of our joy,
-**we ask for the grace of healing the brokenhearted.**
Through Mary, seat of wisdom,
-**we ask for the grace of guidance in our lives.**
Through Mary, mother of God,
-**we ask for the grace to recognize Jesus in the poor.**
Amen



FEAST OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM
September 9

Gospel: (Luke 10: 25-37)

"And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied: "There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell in with robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and then went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road; he saw him but continued on. Likewise there was a Levite who came the same way; he saw him and went on. But a Samaritan who was journeying along came on him and was moved to pity at the sight. He approached him and dressed his wounds, pouring in oil and wine as a means to heal. He then hoisted him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him. The next day he took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request: "Look after him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on my way back." Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who treated him with compassion." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same."

Reflection:

Frederic heard the call of Jesus –to be merciful. He saw the works of mercy as calls to action. He believed that if he genuinely wanted to serve the poor and others, he had to direct his works of mercy to the moral and spiritual betterment of individuals, not only to the alleviation of their physical distress.

Vincentian Meditation:

At Frederic Ozanam's beatification ceremonies, August 22, 1997, Pope John Paul II told the world: "Frederic observed the real situation of the poor and sought to be more and more effective in helping them in their human development. He understood that charity must lead to efforts of justice...that charity and justice go together. Frederic had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country." (Memorial of the Beatification of Frederic Ozanam, p.82)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How are you living the spirit of Frederic in "justice and charity"?

Closing Prayer: A Litany in Honor of Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Frederic Ozanam, defender of faith,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, promoter of hope,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, apostle of charity,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, exemplary husband and father,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, lover of poverty and the poor,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, advocate of the dignity of the human person,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, servant of the truth,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, model for Catholic teachers and professors,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, disciple of St. Vincent De Paul,	pray for us.
Frederic Ozanam, faithful son of the Church,	pray for us.

Amen



TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
September 9, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 8:27-35)

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples this question: *"Who do people say that I am?"* They replied, "Some, John the Baptizer, others, Elijah, still others, one of the prophets." *"And you,"* he went on to ask, *"who do you say that I am?"* Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah!" Then he strictly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be put to death, and rise three days later...He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: *"If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."*

Reflection:

The cross is exalted—honored and venerated—because it brings life. But the only way we can share in this life is *believing* in Jesus and *taking up* our own cross so that death leads to life. Believing in Jesus implies sharing in Jesus' death as well as his resurrection. For most of us, we readily see the crosses in our lives. Perhaps the challenge of this gospel is to see beyond our crosses to glory and life. This is the challenge of the cross: to see that glory in our everyday lives. Good surrounds all of us; the cross invites us to see that good—out of pain and poverty can come a new life that has value, meaning, and purpose for self and others. (Living Liturgy, p.208)

Vincentian Meditation:

The cross is always seen in light of the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the cross remains in darkness. Also, there is no resurrection without the cross. The cross of Christ, therefore, stands with the resurrection at the center of the good news we believe in. Together, they tell us how deeply God loves us. They evangelize us. And, besides the cross of Jesus, the crosses of his members can evangelize us, too. Our lives can be transformed by the suffering love of Jesus' followers, who fill up his sufferings in their bodies: the sick, who bear illness with courage; the grieving, who hope against hope; the dying, who clearly trust in the resurrection. The "foolishness" of the cross will be credible on our lips only if we have learned its "wisdom" from sharing in the suffering of our brothers and sisters. (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p. 48-49)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you been evangelized by others who bear their cross in faith and hope?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you became obedient even unto death, death on the cross,

-may we help to carry the burdens of others.

Jesus, you carried your cross with faith and trust,

-may we patiently endure our own times of suffering.

Amen.



TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 16, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 9:30-37)

Jesus and his disciples came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, Jesus began to ask them, *"What were you arguing about on the way?"* They remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, *"If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."* Taking a child, he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, *"Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."*

Reflection:

Jesus uses the model of a little child to illustrate his point. Children are innocent and without pretensions. They embody what "least of all" means. This also illustrates to what extent the disciple is to become the "servant of all" by receiving even the "least of all." The total self-emptying that enables one to receive the "least of all" describes the disciple. This is how we receive Jesus—by receiving the least. No one is insignificant. (Living Liturgy, p.212)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Are we really able to hear the cries of the poor, of the most oppressed: the women and children, who are often the poorest members of society; those discriminated against because of race, color, nationality, religion; the AIDS victims, who are often shunned by their families and by the physically healthy, those on the "edges of life," the helpless infants and the helpless aged, who are unable to speak up themselves? Are we alert, "listening," to the "signs of the times": the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and the repeated call for justice made by the Church? (Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor*, p. 25-26)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways are you challenged to be a "servant of all" by receiving the "least of all"...whose cries are the hardest to hear?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, set our hearts on fire with compassion for the "least of all,"

-so that we may suffer with those who suffer.

Lord, give us the grace to hear the cries of the poor,

-so that we may be a servant of the most oppressed.

Lord, help us to listen to the "signs of the times,"

-so that we may respond to the call for justice in our world.

Amen



TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 26, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 9: 38-48)

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our company." Jesus said in reply: "Do not try to stop him. No man who performs a miracle using my name can at once speak ill of me. Anyone who is not against us is with us. Anyone who gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ will not, I assure you, go without his reward. But it would be better if anyone who leads astray one of these simple believers were to be plunged in the sea with a great millstone fastened around his neck."

Reflection:

We often have strict, legitimate criteria for who can belong or not. In this gospel the apostle John is bringing to Jesus' attention that someone who "doesn't belong" was doing what Jesus did. Jesus lays down a simple, clear rule: anyone who is doing good in Jesus' name cannot also speak ill of Jesus. Jesus has a simple rule for who belongs in his company—"whoever is not against us is for us." This is a contrast between generous leadership and petty discipleship. Jealousy and pettiness thwart the advancement of God's kingdom and they must be cut out. Jesus keeps us focused on what is essential: God's kingdom. (Living Liturgy, p.218)

Vincenian Meditation:

It is difficult to see Christ in the poor. Sometimes, it is even more difficult to see him in someone in our own Conference. Our Lord keeps saying to us: If you find it difficult to see Christ in the poor or in the person who annoys you in your own Conference, begin by trying to be Christ to such people: to say nothing, to do nothing which Christ would not say or do. That calls for faith. Let us not be discouraged at our failures in our service of the poor or by our failures in fraternal charity. With the grace of Jesus Christ we must keep trying. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 444)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Does "jealousy and pettiness" exist in our Conference...how can we change?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to be true Vincentians, we pray:

-Lord, help us to find you in the poor and in each other.

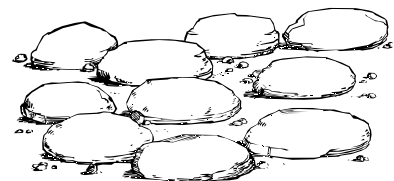
For the grace to be open and honest with each other,

-Lord, heal our jealousy and pettiness.

For the grace to let go of our prejudice and judgmental attitudes,

-Lord, teach us how to forgive each other. Amen

MK 9:40



**WHOEVER IS NOT AGAINST
US IS FOR US.**

MK 9:40

FEAST OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL

September 27

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-9

When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside...his disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them: *"How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs. Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled. Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land. Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill. Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs. Blest are the single-hearted, for they shall see God. Blest too the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God..."*

Reflection:

For Vincent, love is always very concrete, very practical. It is love in practice. "Let us love God, my brothers and sisters," he urges, "let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows." We are called to follow Christ as servants of the poor. Servants get their hands dirty. They labor long and hard. They engage in difficult tasks, visiting the sick and elderly in their homes, feeding street-people, serving the hungry, helping the widow and orphan. They are on the front lines ministering to the poor. As St. Vincent says, we must first do and then teach.

Vincenian Meditation:

St. Vincent tells us that "Love is inventive to the point of infinity." I encourage you today to be very inventive. Because you are on the front line in laboring for the poor, you will be among the first to know their real needs. It will not be psychologists or economists, who study the needs of the poor by examining the data they receive. You will know ahead of them because the poor will tell you directly. Be inventive in meeting those needs. (Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p.133-4)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

In what ways can you become "inventive to infinity" in serving the needs of the poor that come to you?

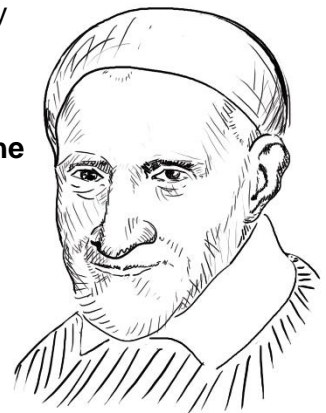
Closing Prayer:

O God, your son Jesus preached the Good News to the poor,
-may we continue to be effective instruments of Christ to those most in need.

O God, give us the strength and creativity we need to stand in solidarity with those who suffer,

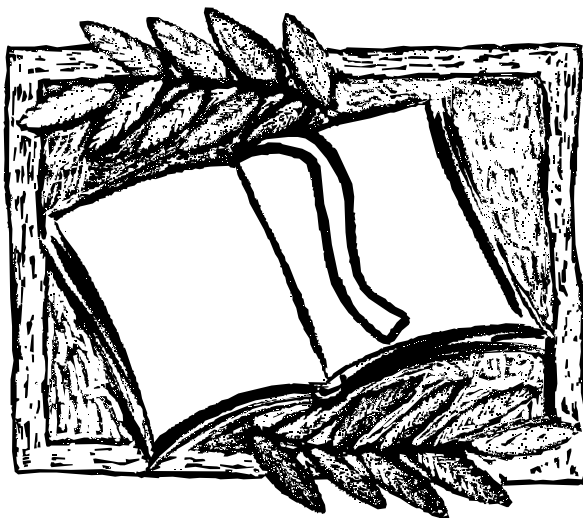
-may our hearts be filled with compassion and love.

O God, you call us to be followers of St. Vincent de Paul,
-grant us the grace to be "inventive to infinity" in serving the poor and suffering! Amen



VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Fourth Quarter 2021



Liturgical Year: B/C

(October—November—December 2021)

Available on SVdPUSA.org



LITURGICAL YEAR-Cycle B

Fourth Quarter - 2021

OCTOBER

October	3	Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
October	10	Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October	17	Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October	24	Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October	31	Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

NOVEMBER

November	1	<i>All Saints Day</i>
November	2	<i>All Souls Day</i>
November	7	Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November	14	Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
November	21	Feast of Christ the King
November	27	<i>Miraculous Medal</i>
November	28	First Sunday of Advent (<i>Start of Year C</i>)
November	28	<i>St. Catherine Laboure</i>

DECEMBER

December	5	Second Sunday of Advent
December	8	<i>Immaculate Conception</i>
December	12	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i>
December	12	Third Sunday of Advent
December	19	Fourth Sunday of Advent
December	25	Feast of the Nativity of the Lord
December	26	Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 3, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 10:2-16)

People were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, *“Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.”* Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hand on them.

Reflection:

The disciples had been with Jesus and heard his teaching for quite some time, but they developed a hardness of heart, and so Jesus became indignant. This gospel is about human hardness of hearts and about to whom the kingdom of God belongs; not to those with hard hearts, but to the innocent ones who keep themselves turned toward God. Jesus illustrates this by saying *“accept the kingdom of God like a child.”* Anything else he might have said to his disciples was not recorded; but we might surmise that he was saying we must lose our hardness of hearts by being open and accepting like little children, by being innocent like children, by being trusting like children, by not picking up the sinful baggage that develops as we grow into and live adulthood. We must lose our schema of things so we can find God’s intention. Lose the hardness of heart. Find the kingdom. Our embracing the kingdom embodies our being embraced by Jesus. (Living Liturgy, p.220)

Vincentian Meditation:

Simplicity “is the virtue I love most.” In St. Vincent’s eyes, Jesus is utterly simple—like a child. He speaks the truth. He says things as they are. His intentions are pure, referring all things in life to God. To St. Vincent, simplicity meant genuineness and transparency. Vincent always knew that all good comes from God and he acknowledge his own limitedness and sinfulness. Vincent lived with an exuberant confidence in God’s forgiveness and love.” (Maloney, *Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent*, p. 131-132)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Has a “hardness of heart” crept into our lives of service?

Closing Prayer:

Those who walk with simplicity proclaim the steadfast love of our God. In trust, we pray,

-Lord, give us genuine and transparent hearts.

Make us open and trusting like children,

-Lord, heal our “hardness of heart.”

Teach us to let go of the baggage that has developed in our lives,

-Lord, help us to live with confidence in your forgiveness.

Give us the joy and openness of a child,

-Lord, may we find you in our service to those who are poor

Amen



TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 10, 2018

Gospel: (Mark 10: 17-30)

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "*Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "*You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.*" At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Reflection:

In reply to the man's profession that he has kept the commandments, Jesus lovingly says to him, "You are lacking in *one* thing." This suggests that, flowing from an undivided heart, dispossessing oneself and following Jesus are *one and the same thing*. To turn this around: if one is to follow Jesus one must come empty-handed. This doesn't mean that we *literally* sell everything; we all have family and social obligations that make having things a necessity. Jesus is saying that we can't let possessions (or anything else, for that matter) divide our hearts. Too often possessions possess us; we must let go so only God can possess us. It is hard to enter the kingdom of God because too often our hearts are divided—we want to let go and follow Jesus at the same time we want to hang onto our possessions and, indeed our very lives! Divided hearts just won't do. God wants our all so God can give all in return. (Living Liturgy, p. 224)

Vincenzian Meditation:

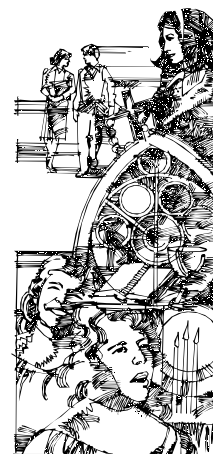
"Did the young man tend to rely too much on negative goodness? He had not broken the commandments, but how much good had he done for others? Was Our Lord saying to him: "With all your possessions, with all your wealth, with all that you could give away, what positive good have you done to others? Have you gone out of your way to help and comfort and strengthen others as you might have done?" Perhaps Our Lord was saying to him: "Stop looking at goodness as consisting in *not* doing things. Take yourself: take all that you have and spend yourself and your possessions on others. Then you will find true happiness in time and in eternity." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 715)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

What "possessions"- time, money, talent—are you called to give to the poor?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to let go of my possessions,
-God of mercy, hear my prayer.
For the grace to have an undivided heart,
-God of mercy, hear my prayer. Amen



TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 17, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 10:35-45)

Jesus said to the disciples, *"You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Reflection:

Jesus responded to his disciples by saying that leadership isn't about power—"lording it over them" or making their authority felt. Leadership is about servanthood, even when it entails suffering and giving one's life. The only way to glory is by self-emptying, serving, giving one's life. Much of our doing for others is simply part of our everyday life, for example, parents taking care of children, spouses doing thoughtful things for each other, a co-worker cooperating with others in the office. Being a "slave" of all, as Jesus says, isn't always something extra or big; most of the time it is simply doing our everyday tasks and keeping in mind that others are the body of Christ. It is doing our everyday tasks with loving care. (Living Liturgy, p. 228)

Vincentian Meditation:

People are not looking for leaders who can solve all their problems or answer all their questions. Often they know the answers already or they know their problem has no immediate solution. More than anything else people look to us who minister to them for our presence of loving, caring and forgiving others. They want our help in their efforts to handle pain and frustration. They look to us for understanding; they seek a sensitive and consoling response to their hurt feelings; they need the spiritual comfort we can bring through our ministry. They want someone who will pray with them, whose presence will remind them that no matter what their difficulties might be, God really loves and cares for them. They want assurance that God will never abandon them. This is the leadership that we are called to live. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 310-quoting Cardinal Bernadin)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How do we in our "servanthood" manifest the presence of a loving, caring and forgiving people? Or how do we not?

Closing Prayer:

Christ calls us to be servants to each other, and so we pray,

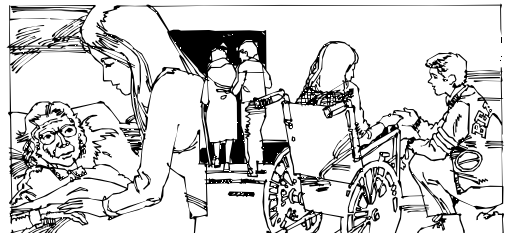
-Lord, help us to be loving, caring and forgiving.

For the grace to help others in their pain and frustration,

-Lord, help us to be understanding and sensitive.

For the grace to bring peace and healing to others,

-Lord, help us to give the "assurance to the poor that God will never abandon them." Amen



THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 24, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 10:46-52)

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples, Bartimaeus, a blind man, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." Many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "*Call him.*" So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him, "*What do you want me to do for you?*" The blind man said, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "*Go your way; your faith has saved you.*" Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Reflection:

The dynamic between Bartimaeus and Jesus is a perfect description of what faith is: Bartimaeus *heard* Jesus, *cried out* to him, *persisted* in his prayer, *came* to Jesus when he called, and *spoke boldly* of his need. All these actions: *hearing, crying out, coming, speaking* describe our Christian discipleship. We must let our faith lead us to Jesus and then we must follow him. Without persistence in prayer it will be impossible for us to follow Jesus faithfully on the road of self-giving. The encounter with Jesus in prayer keeps our relationship with God healthy and strong. The prayer of petition reminds us that disciples can do nothing on their own without Jesus' help. At times we are *doing* our faith by reaching out to those around us in need; at other times we are *being* our faith by taking time to let our God be present to us in prayer. (Living Liturgy, p.232)

Vincentian Meditation:

Our Lord wants us to persevere in prayer and not be discouraged because God seems slow in answering our prayers. Perhaps the reason we become discouraged in prayer is that we feel in a vague way that God is not taking us seriously. The truth is that it is not God who fails to take us seriously when we pray to Him, but rather we fail to take God seriously. Sometimes in our heart of hearts we pray without full confidence that He is going to give us what we ask. I wonder if God is slow in answering our prayers at times in order to perfect the confidence which He wishes us to have in Him who is our Father. Sometimes the reason of God's delay in answering our prayers is that He wants to make us ready to accept what He desires to give us. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 142-3)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

When have you found that sometimes God seems slow in answering your prayers?

Closing Prayer:

For the sick and the poor who wait for healing,

-Lord, hear our prayer.

For the grace to persevere in prayer and trust in God,

-Lord, hear our prayer. Amen



THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 31, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 12: 28-34)

One of the scribes came up to Jesus, and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied: *"This is the first: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! Therefore you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. And this is the second, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."*

Reflection:

In this gospel a scribe approaches Jesus with the question, one about which of the 613 Jewish precepts is greatest. Jesus gets to the heart of things, and does more than just answer the scribe's question; he brings to explicit statement the whole underlying meaning of his ministry and what discipleship and inaugurating the kingdom of God is all about. Knowing the law and even keeping the law are not enough—what is required is whole-hearted love of God and neighbor. Jesus in addition to the commandment to love God above all else, tells his listeners to "love your neighbor as yourself." What links our relationship to God, neighbor, and self is love. Law is not kept for its own sake; ideally, law sustains and protects relationships in a loving way. (Living Liturgy, p.242)

Vincenian Meditation:

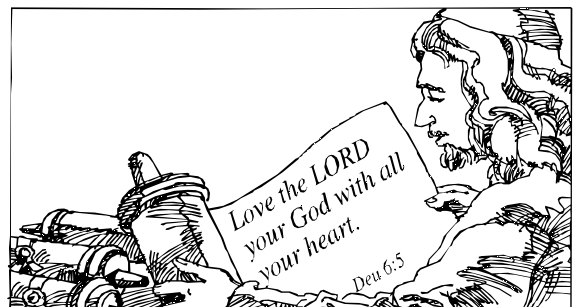
The spiritual genius of St. Vincent lies in the success he had in marrying the two great commandments of the law. The historian, Bremond, tells us: "It is not his love of mankind which led Vincent de Paul to sanctity, but it is rather that sanctity made him truly and efficaciously charitable. It is not the poor who gave him to God, but God who gave him to the poor." The dynamism, the energy, the love which St. Vincent manifested to the poor did not come from any doctrinaire views on politics or sociology. The source of his energy and the clarity of his spiritual vision came from his contemplation of the words and actions of Jesus Christ in the pages of the Gospel and from his daily contact with Jesus Christ in the quietness of prayer. He became convinced that, once men and women are made new through their personal dedication to Jesus Christ, a new world will follow. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 4688)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How have you found the truth that "It is not the poor who give us to God, but God who gives us to the poor."

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, teach us how to love God with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength,
-and our neighbor as ourselves. Amen



FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

November 1

Gospel: (Matthew 5:1-9)

Jesus went up the mountain, and he began to teach them saying, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*"

Reflection:

This solemnity of All Saints is a reminder and promise that through our baptism we already share in the glory of the saints whom we honor. The saints stand out as models who have been faithful to their baptismal commitment and give us courage and strength that we, too, can be faithful. We know some of the saints who have been canonized by name. And there are also countless other saints, our deceased relatives and friends among them, whom we also know by name. This multitude of faithful followers of Christ beckons us to hear what Jesus teaches in the gospel: "Blessed are you..." (Living Liturgy, p.240)

Vincenian Meditation:

The Beatitudes are a new scale of values. We might say that the Beatitudes are an invasion of God's madness into the world of what humanity considers to be good sense. Have you ever tried to make a list of what you would consider your eight beatitudes? This could be very revealing and might show a very deep chasm between the values of our Lord and those by which we daily live. Do you feel comfortable with our Lord's Beatitudes? Or has it been your experience, as it has been mine, that when you start to think or talk about one beatitude, you prefer to drop it because of its difficulty, and move on to another which you would consider more simple and easy? The beatitude that makes you feel most uncomfortable is probably the one that is most relevant to you personally. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.739)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

Who is your favorite "Saint" canonized formally or informally?

Closing Prayer:

May we work together to build up the kingdom of God,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May our desire for God draw us more deeply into prayer,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May we comfort the broken hearted in their sorrow,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

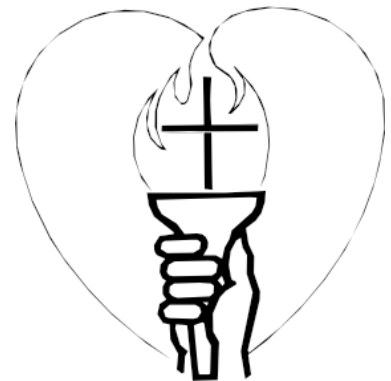
May we feed the hungry and bring mercy to the poor,

-Saints of God, intercede for us.

May we be peacemakers,

-Saints of God, intercede for us. Amen

*Take hold of
the eternal life.*



COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

November 2

Gospel: (John 6: 37-40)

Jesus said to the crowds: *"Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day."*

Reflection:

This feast day reminds us that God is faithful to God's promise to save and that the victory of salvation is possible for all. We begin our lives by belonging to the Father who wills that not one of us be lost. God's will that we gain everlasting life is so strong that God sent his only-begotten Son to unite with us in our weak humanity so that we can be raised to a share in divine life. But temptations abound; we make choices selfishly to serve ourselves rather than gracefully serve others and God. Truly, there is a choice to be made and the choice to live in grace is a constant one. Each choice we make, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, truly does take us either closer to God and each other or farther away. The gospel invites us to think of our everyday choices as having consequences—eternal life. (Living Liturgy, p.238)

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic wrote: "I commit my soul to Jesus Christ, my Saviour...I die in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. I've known the misgivings of the present age, but all my life has convinced me that there is no rest for the mind and the heart except in the faith of the Church and under her authority...I implore the prayers of all my friends of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, let not your zeal be slackened by those who say, 'he is in heaven.' Pray unceasingly for one who loved you all much, but who has sinned much. Aided by your supplications, dear kind friends, I shall leave this world with less fear. I firmly trust that we shall not be separated and that I shall remain in the midst of you until you rejoin me. May the blessing of God, the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit rest upon you all. Amen" (Derum, *Apostle in a Top Hat*, p 265)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How do we continue to share the stories of and pray for the deceased members of the Society?

Closing Prayer:

Let us remember the members of the our Conference who have died,
-may they celebrate now in the feast of heaven.
Let us remember all the poor who have gone before us,
-may they receive the wine of peace and the bread of life.
Amen



All will
be made
alive in
Christ

1 Cor 15:22

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

November 7, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 12:38-44)

Taking a seat opposite the treasury, Jesus observed the crowd putting money into the collection box. Many of the wealthy put in sizable amounts; but one poor widow came and put in two small copper coins worth about a cent. He called his disciples over and told them: *"I want you to observe that this poor widow contributed more than all the others who donated to the treasury. They gave from their surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all that she had to live on."*

Reflection:

The widow is described as poor; she contributes "all she had." Surprisingly, the "large sums" given by the "rich people" pale in comparison to the widow's far greater gift of "two small coins." She gives her all, her whole livelihood, "from her want." It is not the size of the gift which measures its value but the depth of the self-gift from which it comes. This is the kind of giving of which Jesus takes note. The widow in the gospel is the model for the radical demand of discipleship: she gives her all. Discipleship doesn't mean that we necessarily do big and heroic things. It does mean that we do everything and meet whatever challenges come our way with hearts set right—we give of ourselves for the good of others. (Living Liturgy, p.246)

Vincentian Meditation:

In the movie *Monsieur Vincent*, there is a scene where Queen Anne of Austria, is talking to Vincent towards the end of his life. She is listing some of his great achievements. He listens pensively and then mutters: "I have done nothing." She continues to catalogue the works he has initiated and again Vincent mutters: "I have done nothing." The Queen becomes a little impatient with him and says: "Monsieur Vincent, if you say you have done nothing, what must we do if we are to save our souls?" Monsieur Vincent slowly raises his head and with his piercing black eyes looks at the Queen and utters one word:

"More." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.467)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

What **"More"** can we do?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, our guide,

-give us the generosity to give "from our want."

Jesus, our life,

-give us loving hearts.

Jesus, our light,

-give us the grace to do "More." Amen



THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

November 14, 2021

Gospel: (Mark 13:24-32)

Jesus said: *"In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you will know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates...Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."*

Reflection:

Conformity with Jesus' words means that we hear the teachings of Jesus and live them out. We have to live *now* to create a future for ourselves that we want and that *God wants* for us. When we live in conformity to the Word, hearing Jesus' words and living them out, the future holds no fear for us. Rather than fear, we anticipate our future with joyful expectation. On this second-to-last Sunday of the liturgical year, we realize that we have been faced with a choice throughout our journey during this past liturgical year: to be rooted in this world *or* in the words of Jesus. Our choices *do* make a difference. (Living Liturgy, p.246)

Vincentian Meditation:

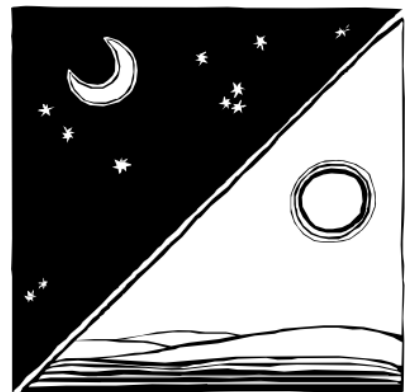
"On the journey of life, we must make choices. Our instincts, our selfishness, our pride will often suggest to us to follow them. It is an easier road. But Christ, His Church and our consciences suggest another way. To follow that road, we must say *no* to our natural instincts. It may be difficult and demand much effort, but that effort will bring with it a peace and contentment that money will not buy. Do we take the easy, downhill road in every choice we make? Sometimes we need to apply the brakes to downhill movements in our lives and try to change direction and to change gears. We do that by allowing Jesus to have a greater say in our lives, in our decisions, and in our thoughts." (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 589-90)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

Where do we need to allow Jesus to have a greater say in our lives, in our decisions, in our thoughts, and in our choices?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, our light,
 -guide us in our decisions.
Jesus, our joy,
 -guard us in our choices.
Jesus, our life,
 -root us in your words. Amen



THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING

November 21, 2021

Gospel: (John 18:33-37)

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "*Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?*" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "*My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here.*" So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a King?" Jesus answered, "*You say I am a King. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*"

Reflection:

Living the paschal mystery means that we see the victorious Christ even in the everyday trials and difficulties that we face. Living the paschal mystery means that we are ever faithful to the rhythm of dying and rising as it unfolds every day—in our *prayer*, work, leisure. Living the paschal mystery means that we are mediators for those whom we meet—that we are the body of Christ leading others to holier and happier lives. If someone should then ask us, "What have you done?" our answer would come quickly and surely—we have served our King. (Living Liturgy, p. 250)

Vincenian Meditation:

As you serve Christ your King, *be an open door* that is fully open to others, especially the poor. Be an open door to the members in your Conference, that is, be *honest*, truthful and simple in your relationships with one another. Be an open door to all: allow people to use you, to pass through you. Allow people to take you for granted. Be an open door by being humble. An open door does not discriminate, allowing some to pass and some not. Open the door of your heart widely to those who claim a little more understanding from you. Open the door of your heart so widely that you can belong to the truth and listen to the voice of Jesus. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.113)

Discussion: (Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How can you become more of an "open door"?

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray to Christ our King, source of compassion and love,
- **may we bring peace to all who have lost hope.**
For the wisdom to listen to God's voice,
- **may we become an open door to all.**
For the courage to work untiringly for peace and justice,
- **may your kingdom come! Amen**



FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

November 27

Gospel: (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, a virgin named Mary. The angel said to her: "Hail full of grace! The Lord is with you.... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus... The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." Mary said: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Reflection:

On November 27, 1830 Mary appeared to St. Catherine Laboure in the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, in Paris. The Blessed Mother was standing on a globe with streams of light coming from her hands. Around her were the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Sister Catherine was told that a medal was to be made of this picture. Soon, because of all the wonderful graces obtained by those who wore the medal, it was called the "Miraculous Medal." The Vincentian Family has always been rooted in a special devotion to Mary, and the Miraculous Medal is one of our treasured gifts.

Vincentian Meditation:

Sr. Catherine wrote, "I do not know how to find words for what I experienced and perceived, or for the beauty and the splendor of those magnificent rays (coming from the hands of the Blessed Virgin). Mary told me, "They are the symbol of the graces which I shed on those who ask me for them. Have a medal struck according to this model; all those who wear it, especially if they wear it around the neck, will receive great graces, and these graces will be abundant for those who wear it with confidence." (From St. Catherine Laboure's account of the apparitions, November 27, 1830)

Discussion: (*Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How do you share in the Vincentian devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal intercede for us as we come to the foot of the altar with the cries of the world,

-Pray for us who have recourse to you.

In solidarity with those who cannot voice their own cries for healing, compassion, and strength, we say,

-Pray for us who have recourse to you.

Accompanying the oppressed peoples of the world, we say,

-Pray for us who have recourse to you. Amen



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

November 28, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves. Men will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the earth. The powers in the heavens will be shaken. After that, men will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with great power and glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand. Be on guard... The great day will suddenly close in on you like a trap. The day I speak of will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth, so be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, and to stand secure before the Son of Man."*

Reflection:

This time of year is filled with anticipation and waiting! The important questions for us are, "What do we anticipate?" and "How do we await?" Stores are filled with Christmas things. Lights and decorations have sprung up. Christmas music on the radio is another harbinger of the day for which we wait. Our work of preparation is busied with card- sending, party-planning and attending, and gift-shopping. The First Sunday of Advent, the Church's New Year, ushers in a different way of waiting, of heightened anticipation. We Christians don't wait for a what, but for a Whom. And that changes the character of our waiting! If the followers of Christ are vigilant and have lives "blameless in holiness," then when Christ comes they can "stand erect" without fear but with joyful anticipation of their redemption. This is the Whom and what of our waiting! (Living Liturgy, p. 2)

Vincenian Meditation:

Waiting in joyful anticipation...if we are to rejoice in the grace of God, we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart, the sort of heart which Our Lady had and with which, she "pondered all things in her heart." Our Lady has a marvelous capacity for wonder. There can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the poor, but our service must come from a heart which resembles that of Our Lady who knew how to be silent, who knew how to wonder, who knew who to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 56)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence)

How will you "await" in joyful anticipation, silence and wonder for Christmas this Advent?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, as we await the fulfillment of your promise,
-give us a heart that knows how to be silent.
You come as a visible sign of love,
-give us a heart that knows how to wonder.
Strengthen us by your grace,
-give us a heart that lives in joyful anticipation. Amen



November 28

Jesus said to his disciples: *“Do not live in fear, little flock. It has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be.”*

St. Catherine Labouré entered the Daughters of Charity in 1830. When she was a novice, the Blessed Mother appeared to her several times in the Motherhouse Chapel asking that a medal be made in her honor. Although the Miraculous Medal *became* well known throughout the world, Sister Catherine devoted her life to the service of the poor elderly in silence and humility for forty-six years. She is known as the saint of silence, as she kept her secret of being the one who saw Mary until her death. She was a woman of profound prayer and service, a true “mystic in action” as a Daughter of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. She is, in a special way, the patroness of the elderly.

Sr. Catherine wrote: “Whenever I go to the chapel, I put myself in the presence of our good Lord, and I say to him, ‘Lord I am here. Tell me what you would have *me to do.*’ *If he gives me some task, I am content and I thank him. If he gives me nothing, I still thank him* since I do not deserve to receive anything more than that. And then, I tell God everything that is in my heart. I tell him about my pains and joys, and then I *listen*...If you listen, God will also speak to you, for with the good Lord, you have to both speak and listen. God always speaks to you when you approach him plainly and simply.” (St. Catherine Labouré)

In your prayer do you “speak and listen?” How has God directed you in your service to the poor - giving you a “task to do”?

St. Catherine, servant of the sick and elderly poor,
-help us to grow in the virtue of humility.

St. Catherine, visionary of the Miraculous Medal,
-increase our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. Catherine, model of prayer and service,
-show us how to be contemplatives in action.

St. Catherine, woman of prayer,
-give us the grace to approach God plainly and simply.

Amen



FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

December 8

Gospel: (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And he said to her, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age...for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Reflection:

This festival in honor of Mary celebrates her innocence from the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb. Mary enjoyed a singular intimacy with God, for it was she who conceived by the Holy Spirit and carried in her womb for nine months the very Son of God. Her body—conceived in innocence and kept free from the stain of sin throughout her life—was a fitting temple to nurture the human life of the divine Son. Like Mary, we must respond to God's offer of graceful innocence with our own "Behold, I am the handmaid (servant) of the Lord." Then, like Mary, we too, bear the Son of God within us. She is the model for God-like innocence. She is our Mother and helps us attain for ourselves the fruits of her great privilege-Emmanuel, God is with us! (Living Liturgy, p.6)

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic Ozanam had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from his youth to his death. Frederic was insistent that the Society take Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as its patroness. The first members of the Society chose December 8th as their special Marian feast twenty years before the formal proclamation of the dogma in 1854 by Pope Blessed Pius IX and a year after Frederic's death! Vincentians implore Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, their patroness, to intercede for their Councils and Conferences, their lives and ministry. (SVDP Manual, p. 34-35)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How does our Conference show devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Through Mary, conceived without sin, we now lift our hearts and say,

-Holy God, hear our prayer.

Through Mary, queen of all saints,

-we ask for healing for those who are brokenhearted.

Through Mary, patroness of our Society,

-we ask for the grace of fidelity for all Vincentians in the world.

Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 5, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 3:1-6)

The word of God was spoken to John in the desert. He went about the entire region of the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins, as is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A herald's voice in the desert, crying, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, clear him a straight path. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be leveled. The windings shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.'"

Reflection:

John the Baptist urges us to "Prepare the way of the Lord." Our culture tells us to prepare for the birth of a Baby, an event that evokes wonderful feelings of warmth and happiness. But John's message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" suggests that we must examine our lives in light of the salvation we seek. It is difficult to orient our lives, anticipation, and preparation with balance and vision toward a glorious Christ who is yet to come. It is far easier to prepare for a Jesus who is a sweet, innocent Baby. The gospel challenges us to take the real events of our everyday lives—all the suffering and pain, all the anxiety and hopelessness, all the joy and peace—and see them as means to recognize the presence of Christ to us. This is what Advent is all about—recognizing the presence of Christ in our lives as salvation already come. (Living Liturgy, p. 10)

Vincentian Meditation:

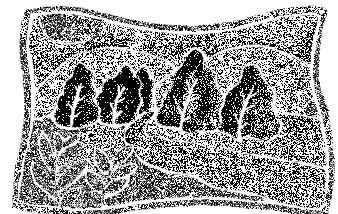
God speaks to us in all sorts of ways: through Scriptures, through his Church, but also through all the events, great and small, that happen to us. Since most of our lives are made up of very ordinary tasks which we must do each day, it is in these especially that the voice of the Lord is to be heard. We make the mistake so often of expecting God to speak to us through some great event or happening when, in fact, all the time He is speaking to us in all the small events of each day. Sometimes in life we don't know what to do. God lead us even when our path changes radically, ends abruptly or is surrounded in darkness. By sitting patiently and trustingly in prayer, we gradually see or feel his presence and guidance. It is also true that God often uses the people and the happenings in our daily life to teach us and lead us on the way we should go. Advent tells us to be attentive, to listen in patience and peace.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How has Advent been a time of recognizing and finding the presence of Christ in your life?

Closing Prayer:

Come Lord Jesus, give us the grace to,
-**trust in your loving presence and guidance.**
Come Lord Jesus, give us the grace to,
- **"Make ready the way of the Lord."**
As we eagerly await your coming, come to all people
-**especially the poor and the forgotten. Amen**



Regard the patience of our Lord.

2 Pt 3:15

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 12, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 3:10-18)

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He answered, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."... Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached the good news to the people.

Reflection:

The "good news" is a message of a topsy-turvy world. John baptizes and preaches to the crowds, the "common folk", and in answer to the question "What should we do?" he answers to the effect, "more than you would wish to do or that can be expected of you"— share what you have with those who have not. John's good news is that of a totally different way of seeing life. The question, "What should we do?" is asked three times in today's gospel, and the answer is invariable: reach out to the marginalized with whatever you have and they need. This is the good news of John, and it is identical to the good news Jesus preached. John directs our attention to Jesus and the inauguration of his ministry to the poor and those in need. And so we ask, "What should we do?" (Living Liturgy, p. 14)

Vincentian Meditation:

Sr. Rosalie said: "One night I dreamed that I stood at the judgment seat of God. He received me with great severity and was about to pronounce my sentence to perdition, when suddenly I was surrounded by an immense throng of persons carrying old shoes, hats, and clothing which they showed to God and said, 'She gave us all these things!' Then God looked at me and said, 'Because you gave all these old clothes in My Name, I open heaven to you. Enter, for all eternity!' (White Wings and Barricades, p.161)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

If we looked at Jesus and asked, "What should we do?" what answer would he give to us?

Closing Prayer:

As our Advent journey continues, we turn in hope to Christ and ask,

-Lord Jesus, what should we do?

Watch over all children, that they may know your love,

-Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay.

Protect all who are abused and neglected,

-Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay.

Strengthen all Vincentians in their efforts to reveal your love,

-Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay. Amen



Rejoice in the Lord always.

Th 1:46

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

December 12

Gospel: (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And he said to her, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age...for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Reflection:

On a December morning in 1531, the Virgin Mary appeared in Mexico to Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican farmer. During that first sacred encounter and in several more apparitions over the next few days, Mary spoke to Juan Diego in his native, Aztec language and asked him to petition the bishop to build a church. She instructed him to bring roses to the bishop, and when he opened his cloak to drop the flowers before the bishop's feet, all those present were stunned to see Our Lady's image painted on his cloak. Why did Mary appear to Juan Diego rather than to the bishop himself, or someone else who was more powerful? Mary's action is a sign of solidarity with those who might not be considered the most prestigious or powerful by society's standards. She shows that even a humble farmer has important contributions to make.

Vincentian Meditation:

Frederic Ozanam had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from his youth to his death. And so with a Vincentian heart we respond to the US Catholic Bishops request encouraging Catholic to mark the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe by praying in solidarity with migrants and refugees everywhere. As the patron of the Americans, she gives us a model for how we too might reach out to and welcome those who seek better lives here in our land. Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast takes place in Advent, when we recall how Mary journeyed to Bethlehem with Joseph and gave birth to Jesus in a manger. Throughout Advent we ask Mary's intercession for the safety and well-being of her fellow traveler—especially migrants and refugees—and we pray that her witness inspires us to stand in greater solidarity with them.

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How does our Conference show devotion to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Through Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, we now lift our hearts and say,
- bring healing for those who are brokenhearted and protect all migrants and refugees.

Through Mary, patroness of our Society,
-we ask for the grace of a Vincentian heart. Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 19, 2021

Gospel: (Luke 1:39-45)

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Reflection:

The gospel for this Fourth Sunday of Advent presents us with the meeting of two pregnant women, one older but no wiser about such things than the other quite young mother-to-be, for this was the first child for both. Such a meeting! The infant in Elizabeth's womb gave a mighty kick when Mary greeted her, and Elizabeth recognized the baby of Mary's womb as her Lord. Jesus, the Son of God Most High, became incarnate—took on human flesh—as a necessary step to salvation. Jesus's body was "prepared" as the fruit of Mary's womb. He came to "do God's will." Mary believed and it was fulfilled. She didn't count the cost. Neither can we. (Living Liturgy, p.18)

Vincenian Meditation:

The mystery of the Incarnation was the permanent inspiration of St. Vincent's life. It must be ours, too. We shall only fully see Christ in the poor when we have fully seen God in Christ. That is why all that we do and say will have meaning only if it is born of our relationship with Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man. What we bring to the poor must be more than a program for the betterment of their material and economic condition. We must bring something of the peace, the joy and the spiritual freedom which we ourselves have experienced from being present to Jesus Christ through prayer and the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. I hope that through giving some time this Christmas to the poor and lonely—often a listening heart is of more value than money— you will have enriched the lives of some of those millions of people who have so much less to eat than we have, and so much less to live for. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.49-50)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have we brought peace and joy to the poor this Advent?

Closing Prayer:

As we prepare for Christmas we pray for those who live in doubt,

-may our lives be a sign of faith.

We pray for those who live in fear and oppression,

-may our lives be a sign of hope.

We pray for those who do not experience God's love,

-may our lives be a sign of charity. Amen



CHRISTMAS

December 25

Gospel: (Luke 2:1-14)

Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold I bring you good news of great joy...for a savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Reflection:

Why do we wish each other "Merry Christmas"? Surely, not because Jesus was born into a perfect world and not because we have a perfect world or perfect families today. "Merry Christmas"? Perhaps not for all. But because of Jesus, *all* of us can celebrate a Christmas that is joyful and blessed. The Savior of the world was born during the night of the year when darkness is the longest. Jesus comes for the people in dark places. The real, lasting, and deep joy is that the Light shines there. That is why we can say to each other "Merry Christmas"! (Living Liturgy, p.24)

Vincenzian Meditation:

In working to restore all things in Christ we are not alone. God is with us: Emmanuel. His poor also are close to us. May we never forget that the ultimate source of hope and joy for the poor lies in our sharing with them our own deep personal conviction, born of prayer, that with the birth of Christ the Kingdom of God has come; a kingdom of justice, of love and of peace. May your celebration of Christmas be a joyful one! (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 366)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

In what ways have we shared with the poor our own deep personal conviction of the kingdom of God?

Closing Prayer:

On this day, joy was reborn into the world,
-**may we share the joy of Christ with everyone.**
On this day, hope was reborn into the world,
-**may we bring the hope of Christ to those who are poor.**
On this day, love was reborn into the world,
-**may we bring the love of Christ to our family and our world.**
Amen

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

December 26, 2021



Gospel: (Luke 2:41-52)

The parents of Jesus used to go every year to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover... and as they were returning at the end of the feast, the child Jesus remained behind unknown to his parents.

Thinking he was in the party, they continued their journey for a day, looking for him among their relatives. Not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. On the third day they came upon him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligence and his answers. His Mother said to him "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow." He said to them: "*Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house?*" But they did not grasp what he said to them.

Reflection:

Parenting is a great entry into the paschal mystery! Good parents spend their children's growing up years emptying themselves of their own desires for the sake of the well-being of their children, endlessly and willingly sacrificing for them. Then, when the children are adults, parents must be willing to "let go" so that the children can be about their own business. By letting go, parents can help their children know their true identity is that they really belong to God. Thus can they find their real place in the world. Family is about relationships. A holy family is one in which their relationships include God at the center. (Living Liturgy, p.30)

Vincenian Meditation:

In his great joy Frederic wrote about his first-born, Marie, his observations proclaiming the unconscious apostolate of children, which, in God's providence is to make parents richer and stronger spiritually. "We will begin her education early," wrote Frederic, "and at the same time, she will begin ours; for I perceive that Heaven has sent her to us to teach us a great deal, and to make us better. I cannot look upon that face, so full of innocence and purity, without seeing the sacred impression of the Creator...How could I dare teach her lessons that I did not practice? Could God have found a kinder way of instructing me, of correcting me, of setting my feet on the road to heaven?" (Frederic Ozanam: *Derum, Apostle in a Top Hat*, p.186)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have you found that children do "teach us a great deal and make us better?"

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for the children who have touched our lives,

-may they grow in age, wisdom and grace.

Jesus, thank you especially for grandchildren,

-may they grow in age, wisdom and grace.

Jesus, thank you for "instructing and correcting us" through children,

-may we all grow in age, wisdom and grace. Amen

