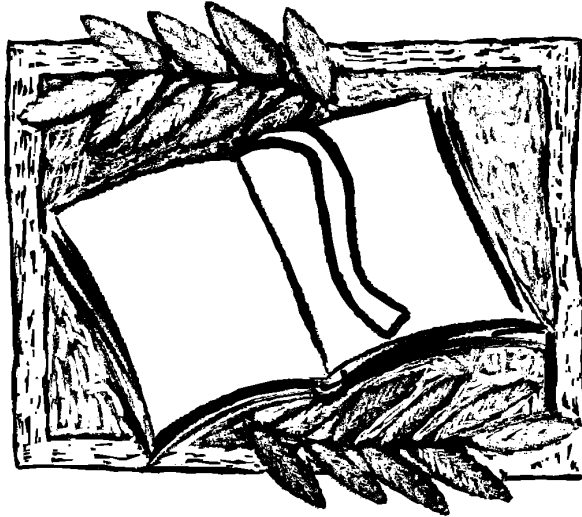


VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Second Quarter 2024



Liturgical Year: B

(April—May—June 2024)

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-Cycle B

Second Quarter-2024

APRIL

April 7	Second Sunday of Easter
April 14	Third Sunday of Easter
April 21	Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 28	<i>Feast of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla</i>
April 28	Fifth Sunday of Easter

MAY

May 5	Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 9	<i>Feast Day of St. Louise de Marillac</i>
May 12	Ascension
May 19	Pentecost
May 26	Trinity Sunday

JUNE

June 2	The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 7	Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
June 9	Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 16	Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 23	Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 24	Feast of Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
June 30	Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 7, 2024

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)

Vincentian 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 14, 2024

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)

Vincenian 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 21, 2024

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.

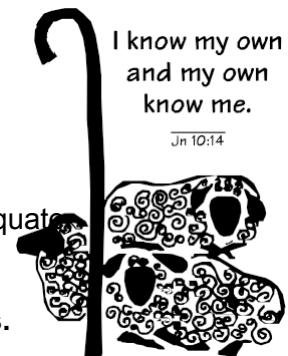
For those whose labor is burdensome and whose wages are inadequate,

-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

April 28, 2024

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 5, 2024

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:

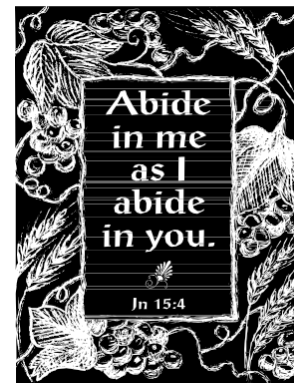
St. Vincent was a great inspiration to Frederic Ozanam in his life, work and writings. For Vincent, however, and for Frederic, it was the charity of Christ which pressed them on to do what they did for the poor of their time. It is a mystery how God could love mankind, disfigured by sin and infidelity. 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 12, 2024

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)

Vincenian 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,

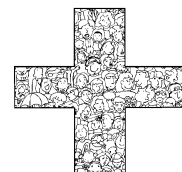
-Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth.

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 19, 2024

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)

Vincentian 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 26, 2024

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:

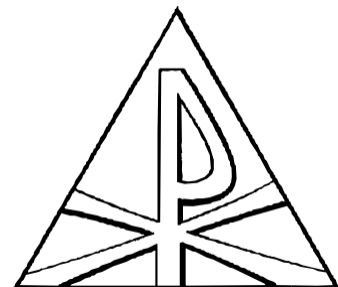
In the Manual of the Society we read: Conferences meet regularly and frequently, as a celebration of mutual friendship and out of a passion to serve the Lord. Unlike other organizations within and without the Church, the Conference meets less to conduct business than *to celebrate and deepen its unity* 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 2, 2024

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:

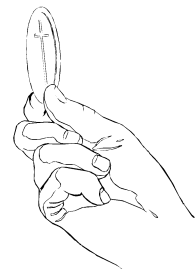
The Manual of the Society states: The Eucharist plays a major role in Vincentian spirituality. This is seen in the lives of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic. Vincent spent one hour each morning before the Blessed Sacrament before celebrating Mass. He would frequently make short visits to the chapel before 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 7, 2024

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?

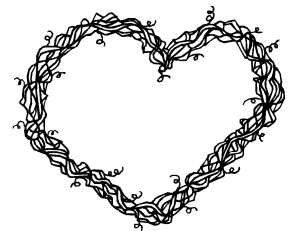
This is what our Vincentian call is all about. It is what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is all about. It is what Vincentian spirituality is all about. (Eugene Smith, National President)

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**



TENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

June 9, 2024

Gospel: (Mark 3: 20-35)

His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers: And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Reflection:

To "do the will of God" demands interior detachment as we search to discern what God is asking of us. It means that our mind cannot be already made up so that we are trying to change God's mind and everybody else's. We must be willing to give up control, to step out of our preconceived plans, and to stand in the freedom of accepting a "yes" or a "no". And so we are called to answer the following questions in simplicity and honesty: Am I willing to let go of my prejudices? Am I willing to step outside my preconceived plan? Am I willing to give up control?

Vincetian Meditation:

Vincetian Discernment is a prayerful process through which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can come to discover the difference between what is our will and what is the will of God. For St. Vincent, it was important that every decision he made conformed to what he believed to be the will of God. The will of God was indeed his North Star. The prayerful discovery of the will of God in the spirit of Vincent is simple and radical, it demands faith and trust, and it is rooted in honesty and openness to the Spirit in prayer. Discernment is not a democratic voting process- or a decision making process of the head. It demands that we take the journey from our head to our heart—to a listening heart that is rooted in prayer. St. Vincent knew that discernment demands our mind and our heart. For it is true, that it is only when we have critical minds and listening hearts, that the Spirit can lead us from the contract of decision making, to the covenant of discernment. And there is a radical difference between a contract, which is rooted in the head, and a covenant, which is rooted in the heart. (Fr. Hugh O'Donnell, CM)

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

In our Conference how do we prayerfully discern the will of God?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, give us the grace of discernment in the spirit of St. Vincent,
so that we can be willing to give up control and step out of our preconceived plans.

Jesus, give us the grace to take the journey from our head to our heart,
so that we will have critical minds and listening hearts.
Amen



ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 16, 2024

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 23, 2024

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:

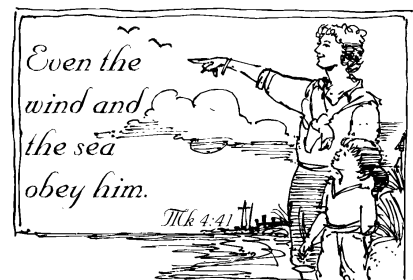
"Quiet, Be Still!" If we could absorb the spirituality of that single line of the gospel, there would be much more peace in our lives. We spend so much time fretting about the future because we have not learned to "be still"...to wait on the Lord. "Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith?" 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.

still.

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 30, 2024

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)

Vincentian 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

