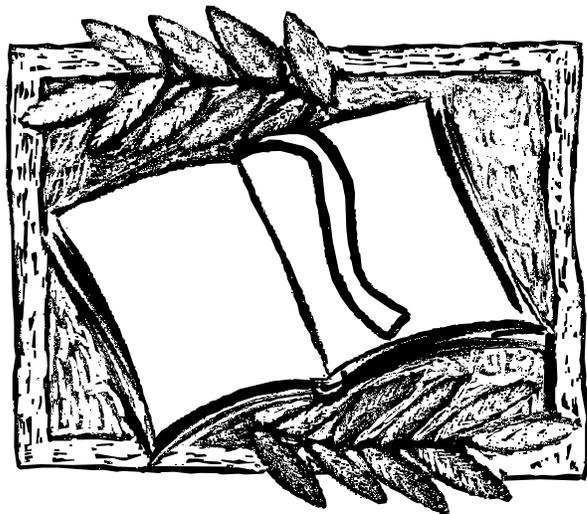


VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Second Quarter 2012



Liturgical Year: Cycle B
(April—May—June 2012)

Available on WWW.SVDPUSA.ORG (*Spiritual Resources*)





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/QUIETENING 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

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.

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:

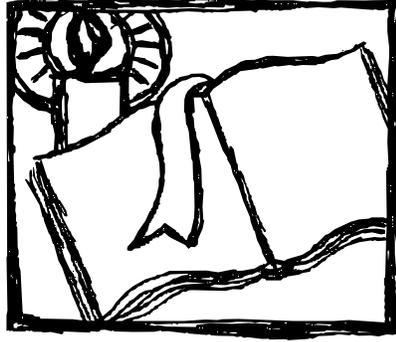


St. Vincent de Paul never wrote a book about his spiritual teachings. But we find the living voice of the saint in his letters and conferences in which he trained his followers for the mission of service to the poor.

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-2012

APRIL

April 1	Palm Sunday
April 8	Easter Sunday
April 15	2 nd Sunday of Easter
April 22	3 rd Sunday of Easter
April 28	<i>Feast of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla</i>
April 29	4 th Sunday of Easter

MAY

May 6	5 th Sunday of Easter
May 13	6 th Sunday of Easter
May 20	7 th Sunday of Easter or Ascension (May 17)
May 27	Pentecost

JUNE

June 3	Trinity Sunday
June 10	Body and Blood of Christ
June 15	Feast of the Sacred Heart
June 17	11 th Sunday of Ordinary Time
June 24	12 th Sunday of Ordinary Time

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION
April 1, 2012

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 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)

Vincentian 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 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



EASTER SUNDAY
April 8, 2012

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)

Vincentian Meditation:

"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."(St. Vincent)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts 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 15, 2012

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 nailmarks 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 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:

St. Vincent was deeply devoted to the Providence of God. He recommends to us to accept all things: "When something unexpected happens to us in body or mind, good or bad, we are to accept it without fuss as from God's loving hand." If we could live that ideal of St. Vincent, we would have great peace in our lives. "In all circumstances, say "My Lord and My God." (McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.278-9)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts 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.**
Lord, your resurrection turned unbelief to belief,
-**give faith to those who live in doubt.**
Lord, your resurrection gifted the fearful with peace,
-**give peace to those who live in fear. Amen**



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 22, 2012

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)

Vincentian Meditation:

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. (Manual, P.21)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts 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



FEAST OF SAINT GIANNA BERETTA MOLA
April 28

Gospel: (John 20: 19-31)

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, in the presence of her husband and four children. Blessed 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 after a moment of silence*)

How can the Society celebrate and imitate it’s 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 profession 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 joie de vivre, was crowned with her love of piano, painting, tennis, mountain climbing, skiing, the symphony, theatre and traveling.”

Saint Gianna, intercede for us!



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 29, 2012

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:

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.

Discussion: *(Share your thoughts 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,

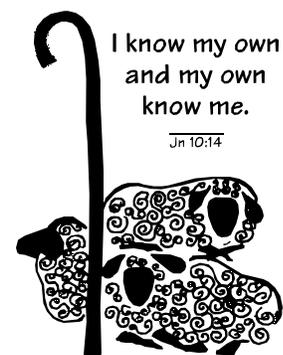
-may they know the healing bond of friendship.

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 though all the members of the Society. Amen



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 6, 2012

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 every one 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:

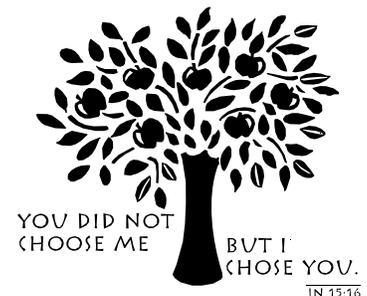
For Frederic, Vincentians transcended racial and national prejudices. They judged women and men strictly on their need, not on their color, nationality, education, morality. Vincentians are non-judgmental. A non-judgmental attitude excludes assigning guilt or innocence, or judging a person’s degree of 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.”*

Discussion: (Share your thoughts 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, Rosalie,
Vincent and Louise. Amen



SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
May 13, 2012

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 everyday 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:

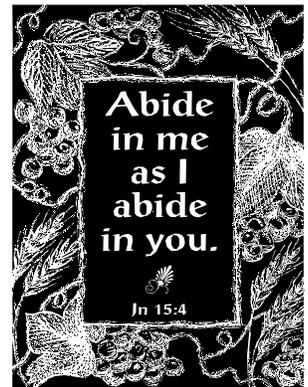
St. Vincent was a great inspiration to Frederic Ozanam in his life, work and writings. For Vincent, however, and for Frederic, it was the charity of Christ which pressed them on to do what they did for the poor of their time. It is a mystery how God could love mankind, disfigured by sin and infidelity.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

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

Closing Prayer:

For the Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
-Grant us the grace to reflect the light and love of God.
For the poor we serve,
-Grant us the grace to be kind and loving. Amen



SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
May 20, 2012

Gospel: (John 17: 11-19)

Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: *“Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one...Now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world...Consecrate them in truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.*

Reflection:

In Jesus’ prayer for his disciples we can *feel* his love and concern. Jesus trusts that his disciples *will* take up his mission, and knows full well that we will face the same fate he is facing -death. Our own lives witness to instances of how Jesus keeps, protects and guards us - when we have those moments of inspiration, when we *know* exactly what to do in a tough situation, when we are tired yet choose to lend a helping hand, when we are lost for comforting words and then they just seem to flow from us. These are the times when we know Jesus is still praying *for us*. All of the confidence and protection Jesus promises in his prayer rests on our surrendering to *Jesus’* discipleship - we must speak words of truth to a world that may or may not receive our words. (Living Liturgy, p.58)

Vincentian Meditation:

For St. Vincent, simplicity is first of all, speaking the truth. It is saying things as they are, without concealing or hiding anything. St. Vincent said, “Simplicity is the virtue I love most, the one to which in all my actions I pay most heed...” The heart must not think one thing while the mouth says another. Vincentians must avoid all duplicity, cunning and double meaning. Simplicity also consists in referring things to God alone, or purity of intention. In St. Vincent’s mind, simplicity was very closely linked with humility and it was inseparable from prudence, which for him meant always basing one’s judgment on the evangelical maxims or on the judgments of Jesus Christ. (Maloney, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, p.38-39)

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

In our Conference how do we live our core value of Simplicity?

Closing Prayer:

Through Christ, the merciful Servant,
-make us one in mind and heart in a spirit of simplicity.
Through Christ, the Healer,
-grant us the grace of humility.
Through Christ, the Resurrected One,
-may we always live in mutual respect, affection and friendship. Amen.



THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 20, 2012

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:

“No work of charity is foreign to the Society.” 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. They 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.

Discussion: (Share your thoughts 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,

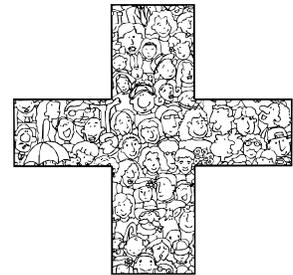
-Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth.

We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,

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

“No work of charity is foreign to the Society”,

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



Go into all the world and proclaim
the good news!

℣k 16:15

PENTECOST
May 27, 2012

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:

It is only when what is heard is pondered, that its full meaning is revealed. The quest for truth, therefore, involves prayerfulness and reflectiveness. 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. 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 after a moment of silence*)

How do we listen 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

June 3, 2012

Gospel: (Matt. 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.

Vincentian Meditation:

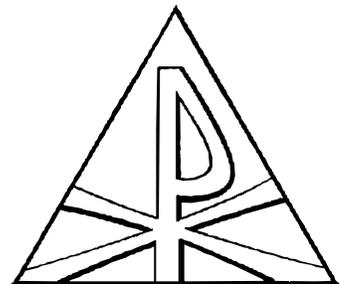
Conferences meet regularly and frequently, as a celebration of mutual friendship and out of a passion to serve the Lord. Unlike other organizations within and without the Church, the Conference meets less to conduct business than *to celebrate and deepen its unity* for essentially spiritual reasons. 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. (Manual, P.19)

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

How 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 BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST
June 10, 2012

Gospel: (Mark 14: 12-16)

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 continued 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:

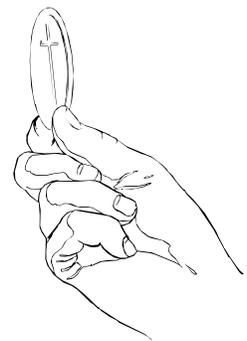
The Eucharist plays a major role in Vincentian spirituality. This is seen in the lives of St. Vincent and Blessed Frederic. Vincent spent one hour each morning before the Blessed Sacrament before celebrating Mass. He would frequently make short visits to the chapel before leaving and upon returning from 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. (Manual, P.65)

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

How can we make the Eucharist play a prominent place in our lives, 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 15, 2012

Gospel: (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 more 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?

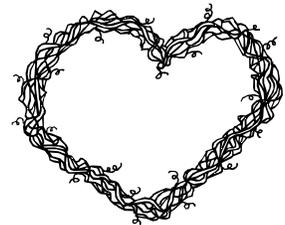
This is what our Vincentian call is all about. It is what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is all about. It is what Vincentian spirituality is all about.(Eugene Smith,Nat.President)

Discussion: (*Share your thoughts 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 17, 2012

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)

Vincentian 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 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 to 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 24, 2012

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

