

VINCENTIAN REFLECTIONS

Second Quarter 2022



Liturgical Year: C

(April – May - June)

Available on SSVPUSA.org





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 C Second Quarter - 2022

APRIL

April 3	Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 10	Palm Sunday
April 17	Easter Sunday
April 24	Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy
April 28	<i>Saint Gianna Molla Feast Day</i>

MAY

May 1	Third Sunday of Easter
May 8	Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 9	<i>St. Louise de Marillac Feast Day</i>
May 15	Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 22	Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 29	Ascension of the Lord

JUNE

June 5	Pentecost Sunday
June 12	Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
June 19	The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
June 24	<i>Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>
June 26	Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

April 3, 2022

Gospel: (John 8:1-11)

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "*Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.*" In response, they went away one by one... So he was left alone with the woman before him. Jesus said to her, "*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "*Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.*"

Reflection:

A story that begins with deathly accusation ends with divine mercy. Where the community's condemnation would have led the adulterous woman to death, Jesus' mercy leads her to new life. A story that begins with exposing the sin of an individual ends with exposing the sinfulness of all. Where the community begins with awareness of the woman's sinfulness, they are transformed through encountering Jesus into awareness of their own sinfulness. A story that begins with human testing of the divine ends with divine invitation to repent. Jesus reveals a new order in which all are called to repentance and the experience of divine mercy. Jesus' desire for us is not death but new life. (*Living Liturgy, p.90*)

Vincenian Meditation:

God's loving presence is cleansing, as baptism and penance remind us. God's love labors to break down the resistance that it finds within us. It is a creative love that works toward change, transformation, new beginnings. God wants to make a home within us. The recurring Lenten season nudges us each year toward self-denial. The real point of ascetical practices is not merely to "give up" objects, but to reconstruct one's deepest self so that God might take fuller possession of our home. Jesus asks that the same energy we might have used in accumulating riches, consolidating power, or pursuing personal pleasure be channeled toward the building up of a "new person" as a dwelling place for God. (*Maloney, Go! On the Missionary Spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 99-100*)

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

Do you hold unjust prejudices and judgments of the poor?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, model of compassion and kindness,
free our hearts from unkind judgment of others.

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

Jesus, model of forgiveness and mercy,
open our hearts to all people. Amen



PALM SUNDAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION

April 10, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 19:28-40)

Jesus proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem... And his disciples who had been sent went off and found everything just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying this colt?" They answered, "The Master has need of it." So they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped Jesus to mount. As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; ...the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."

Reflection:

This Sunday we begin the holiest of Christian weeks, and we carry palms in procession with the atmosphere charged with both expectation and contradiction, with joy and soberness. For most of us Holy Week unfolds like many other weeks; we still contend with work, school, preparing meals, doing laundry, cranky folks, the usual triumphs and setbacks. The readings for Palm Sunday invite us to make this an extraordinary week—a week that concentrates in a few days the ultimate meaning of our whole lives. We must slow down and make choices so that this week doesn't go by without our taking the time to enter into its meaning. The real pity of this Holy Week would be that we miss the opportunity to empty ourselves, take up our own cross, and follow Jesus through death to new life. (*Living Liturgy, p.94*)

Vincenian Meditation:

All Christian spirituality focuses on the crucified and risen Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. The cross is the symbol of what is at the core of Jesus' person: "The way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we, too, must lay down our lives for one another." (1Jn 3:16) The crucified Jesus proclaims that self-giving love is at the heart of being God and at the heart of being human. St. Vincent often recommended to us to meditate on the cross as the symbol of God's love. It is most important that we ourselves experience the love God reveals through the cross, that we have a deep confidence in a personal loving God who works actively in our lives. (*Maloney, Seasons in Spirituality, p.58*)

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

What will you do to find the deeper meaning of Holy Week this year?

Closing Prayer:

As we enter into the mystery of the passion of Christ, 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 17, 2022

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...When Simon Peter went into the tomb and he 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:

Even on this day when the gospel announces the risen Lord, we feel the contradictions that the resurrection mystery arouses—seeing and believing on the one hand, misunderstanding and confusion on the other. This mystery defies all human understanding. The Easter stories tells us that the resurrection isn't something we understand, but believe and live. The challenge really lies in seeing and believing the resurrection comes through our own lives of self-sacrifice that bring new life to others. (*Living Liturgy, p. 108*)

Vincenian Meditation:

On Easter Sunday Jesus rose gloriously from the tomb and in doing so He has given us, who believe in Him, an assurance that we, too, will, by His power, rise from the dead. There are people who say that there will be no resurrection, that there is nothing after death. When next you hear this, think of springtime. During the long hard winter, you wonder "Will spring ever come this year?" The ground was frozen hard and there was not a sign of life in the fields or on the trees. But now everything is changing. Flowers are appearing, the wheat is growing in the fields and leaves are beginning to appear on the trees. No human power can keep back springtime. Since the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the first signs of an eternal springtime have begun to appear. Each of us has met Christians who, despite great suffering that cannot be explained, have continued to believe that death is not the end. These people are signs for us that Jesus Christ has really risen. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 220*)

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

Who are the "Easter" people you have known?

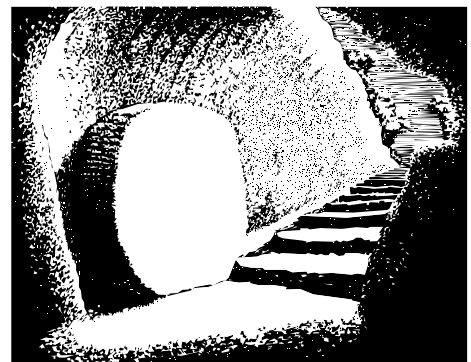
Closing Prayer:

Lord, in your resurrection, you turned unbelief to belief,
increase our faith.

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

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

Amen



SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER/DIVINE MERCY

April 24, 2022

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 said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. So, the 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 my hand into his side, I will not believe.” A week later, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to Thomas, “*Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not doubt, but believe.*”

Reflection:

While we are steeped in this natural life, it is difficult for us to come to terms with resurrected life. This was part of Thomas’ problem: he was seeking tangible proofs—seeing and touching—to come to belief, but the resurrected life of Jesus is a *new life* is beyond tangible proofs. We receive this new life through Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit. We know the fruit of this new life is peace and forgiveness. But how do we come to belief without seeing? Jesus’ ministry is continued in the disciples. Seeing these works is seeing Jesus. Seeing these works brings us to belief. More importantly, *our doing* what Jesus *did*, brings us to belief. Believing isn’t seeing; it’s *doing* the good works of Jesus. (*Living Liturgy, p.112*)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Vincenzians see the crucified everyday in the streets of large cities and in poor country villages. One of the great gifts of St. Vincent was the ability to recognize the crucified Christ in the face of the suffering and to mobilize the energies of others in their service. He was an extraordinary organizer. To aid the most abandoned of his time, Vincent gathered together rich and poor, women and men, clergy and lay. Our meditation on the crucified Lord, who loves us even to death, and on the crucified peoples in whom the Lord continues to live, will always be brightened by resurrection faith. The gospel proclaims loud and clear that suffering love triumphs, that the power of God works through human weakness, that the light overcomes the darkness, that there is hope even in the face of hopelessness. (*Maloney, Seasons in Spirituality, p.59*)

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

How has “*doing the good works of Jesus*” brought you to belief?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, your resurrection brought forgiveness to the disciples,
fill us with your peace!

For the grace “to do your good works”,
fill us with your strength!

For the grace to forgive and to be forgiven,
fill us with your compassion!

For the grace to be witnesses to your resurrection,
fill us with your joy!

Amen



“Do not doubt but believe.”

Jn 20:27

FEAST OF SAINT GIANNA BERETTA MOLLA

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.

Vincenzian 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. Canonized on May 16, 2004, Saint Gianna was called a “mother – martyr for the love of God and in obedience to his commandment...” Gianna was a true Vincenzian! (*SVDP Manual, p.87-88*)

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!



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 1, 2022

Gospel: (John 21:1-19)

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. The disciples had gone fishing but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Have you caught anything to eat?" They answered "No." So he said, "*Cast your net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.*" So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

Reflection:

Resurrected life has its demand—but the incredible thing about our God is that God provides us with all we need, beginning with offering us new life. Accepting the abundance that God offers means that by following Jesus we become Jesus' resurrected presence with the grace to lead others to him. Every day we must take care that our actions announce God's blessings at the same time that they speak of God's goodness and care. Leading others to Jesus doesn't mean doing big things; it means doing the little things well and so reflecting the life of Jesus in us. (*Living Liturgy, p.116*)

Vincentian Meditation:

It is a remarkable fact that in all the appearances of Our Lord after His resurrection, His disciples and friends had a certain difficulty in recognizing Him. Yet that difficulty did not conflict with the assurance which eventually dawned upon all of them, that Jesus Christ had indeed risen from the dead. That should be a source of encouragement to us. We also do not see Him with our physical eyes, and with the first disciples we share the difficulty of seeing Him clearly in the ordinary events of our lives. St. Pius X once wrote: "In all circumstances of your life say: 'It is the Lord.'" This is very Vincentian, as St. Vincent was deeply devoted to the Providence of God, and he recommended that we accept all things by saying: "when something unexpected happens to us in body or mind, good or bad, we are to accept it without fuss as from God's hand." If we could live that ideal of St. Vincent, we would have great peace in our lives. "In all circumstances, say: 'It is the Lord.'" (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 278*)

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

**When in your life or ministry have you found the grace to say:
"It is the Lord?"**

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you rose from the dead that we might live,
fill us with faith and trust!

Help us to do the little things well and so reflect your life,
fill us with your compassion!

And, in all circumstances of our life give us the grace to say,
"It is the Lord."

Amen



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 8, 2022

Gospel: (John 10:27-30)

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Reflection:

In many parishes, this is called "Good Shepherd Sunday" where we reflect on Jesus' care and assurance as we listen to the words "No one can take them out of my hand." We are called to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow him. We follow first by listening. Hearing Jesus—heeding his voice—is already an act of following. This is a good Sunday to bask in Jesus' care and protection, listen to his voice calling us to his loving, embracing hands, and rejoice in the goodness showered upon us who are faithful to his call. (*Living Liturgy, p. 120*)

Vincentian Meditation:

It is not so much what sheep do, nor even what the shepherd does, that the key to understanding the message of Jesus is to be found. It is rather on the quality of the shepherd that we must center our attention: on his heart and mind rather than on his functions. Think of the occasions when our Lord spoke of the shepherd. The shepherd is one who protects; one who searches; one who speaks and calls the sheep by name. The image was a favorite one of our Lord, because it conveyed to His hearers the idea of one who cares and who does not take flight when danger threatens. The shepherd protects, searches, and speaks. This is what Jesus did. Given St. Vincent's sensitivity to fulfilling the will of God in the smallest details of his life, he might well ask us: Do you consistently search out the Will of God, not only in the crisis points of your life, but day by day and hour by hour do you listen to hear his voice? (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 731*)

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

How do we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd in our families and in our Conferences?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, give us the grace to listen to the Good Shepherd,
give us the grace to always search for the will of God.

For those who are lonely or overwhelmed,
may we bring them the Good Shepherd's friendship.

For all those who are poor and destitute,
may we bring them the Good Shepherd's protection.

For the sick and the dying,
may we bring them Good Shepherd's healing love.

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, and 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.

Vincenian Meditation:

"As for your conduct toward the poor, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately."
(Gibson and Kneaves, Praying with Louise, p. 72)

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

In what ways do you see your Conference serving the poor today in the spirit of Louise: showing affection, serving from the heart, speaking gently and compassionately?

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 Vincenian Family continue to grow and multiply throughout the world,
so that the poor will know God's love in a tangible way.

Amen



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 15, 2022

Gospel: (John 13:31-33)

When Judas had left them, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and God will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

Reflection:

The gospels tells us over and over in ever so many ways that love means self-sacrifice. In many human ways we already do this and could think of no other way to act: parents sacrifice plenty for their children; spouses know that love often demands self-sacrifice; we readily respond to others' tragedies with gifts of money and service; we reach out to the perfect stranger on the street who is in need. In fact, we act out of the love that Jesus commands in this gospel by doing the everyday things we do because we share in Jesus's mission when we love. And if an examination of our lives suggests that perhaps we are not so self-sacrificing as Jesus, then this gospel is an invitation to love more completely. (*Living Liturgy, p. 124*)

Vincenian Meditation:

Jesus tells us "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." These words mean much to Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam, and indeed to all members of the Society. There are millions who watch pictures of poverty on our television screens and feel generous towards the poor. Their reaction, so often, goes no further than feeling. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, however, imitates Jesus in that you are not content to feel generous, but you show your generosity at a particular time and place. The Society has always been recognized for its practical charity. 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 indeed the disciples of Jesus! (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 731*)

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

How does our love show that we are disciples of Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

For the grace to be the disciples of Jesus, we pray:

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 all members the spirit of Frederic and Vincent.

Amen



Love one another.

Jn 13:34

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 22, 2022

Gospel: (John 14:23-29)

Jesus said to his disciples: *“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him...I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”*

Reflection:

The only way God dwells among us is to let go of ourselves and hand ourselves over to Jesus. On our own we would not be able to succeed; the good news is that we are not alone, but God dwells within us and gives us all we need to be faithful. These Sundays before Pentecost remind us that as disciples, we never have to feel like the whole task of living the gospel falls on our shoulders alone. God is always present, dwelling within us, to give us the strength we need to be faithful to Jesus’ commands. Only in this way can our everyday lives be fruitful. (*Living Liturgy, p.128*)

Vincentian Meditation:

St. Vincent was interested in feeding the hungry, visiting the prisoners, caring for the sick, educating the poor. But he was also intensely interested in helping people, particularly the poor, to be reconciled with God, to cherish their faith, and to be loyal to the Church. In one word, St. Vincent was interested not only in the bodies of the poor, but in their souls also. There are some people who are only interested in improving the material conditions of the poor. That is important, certainly, but that is only half the work. Every poor person has a soul. Every poor person has a responsibility to save his soul. Every poor person has need of help in that task. It was St. Vincent’s great achievement that he worked to save both the bodies and souls of the poor. He worked to save the whole person. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 255*)

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

How can we better serve the “body and the soul” of those who are poor?

Closing Prayer:

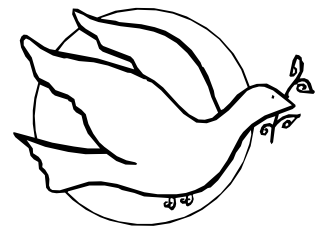
That we may always be your faithful disciples,
Lord, send us your Spirit.

That we may serve the whole person of the poor,
Lord, send us your Spirit.

That we may be open to receive your Advocate,
Lord, send us your Spirit.

That we may know that God is always present, dwelling within us,
Lord, send us your Spirit.

Amen



The Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

Jn 14:26

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 29, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 24:46-53)

Jesus said to his disciples: "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. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them, he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.

Reflection:

Sometimes we Christians can get so caught up in the *doing* that we forget simply taking time to be with our God, is as important to our Christian witness, as actually doing Christian acts. Taking care with our Sunday worship and even taking time to rest on Sunday can be acts of witnessing to Christ. It's a challenge to keep some balance in our lives between the demands of our everyday activities and our desire to give God homage and praise. When things get hectic, the first temptation is to skip prayer time because that seems to have the least immediate results for us. Our deadlines and schedules don't change, but it seems prayer time can be dispensable. In fact, cheating on our prayer time over time can radically affect everything we do. Christian witnessing means God is our focus. (*Living Liturgy, p.132*)

Vincenian Meditation:

If we are to maintain vision in our lives; if we are to be men and women who worship God with our hearts, we must give attention to our prayer. To give attention to prayer means being ready to waste time, so to speak, in prayer. By wasting time in prayer means being ready to sit still in the presence of God, allowing His presence to seep into us and quietly challenge us. It is through prayer that we slowly make Jesus Christ increasingly a point of reference in our lives, for decisions great and small. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 651*)

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

In our Conference is prayer dispensable or indispensable?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus was taken up in a cloud and reigns as Lord of heaven and earth and promising,

"I am with you always, even to the end of time."

We ask for balance in our lives between demands of service and prayer,

Jesus may you always be the center of our lives.

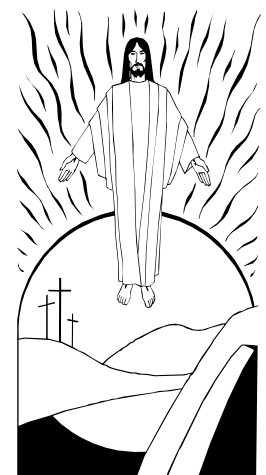
We ask for strength to continue as your faithful disciples,

Jesus may you always be the center of our lives.

We ask for the grace "to waste time" in prayer at our Conference meetings,

Jesus may you always be the center of our lives.

Amen



PENTECOST SUNDAY

June 5, 2022

Gospel: (John 14:15-16; 23-26)

Jesus said to his disciples, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandment. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always. Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.... I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."*

Reflection:

By this indwelling of the Holy Spirit we ourselves become advocates of God's presence for others. This gift of the Spirit, then, makes its demands on us. We must monitor the way we live so that others truly see us as advocates of God's presence bringing new life. This new life that we share with others might be so simple as a reassuring touch or helping hand, or as demanding as giving of our time and money. Living the paschal mystery means that we bask in the good gift of God's life that the Spirit brings. Pentecost is a celebration of both the gift of the Spirit and the effects of that gift—we are sharers in the one body of Christ who take up Jesus's mission to preach the good news of salvation. (Living Liturgy, p.140)

Vincenzian Meditation:

One of the messages which the Church received from the Spirit of God at the Vatican Council II was that it should do more for the poor of the world. Over the past fifty years the Church has increased her interest in the poor. Not only has the Church tried to lighten the sufferings of the poor, but she has tried to be more efficient in bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ and His Church to the poor. Pope John Paul II has said, "He who lacks material resources may be poor, but he who does not know the way which God marks out for him is even poorer. *"What does it profit a man,"* asks Our Lord, *"if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?"* (Mk 8:36) What, my dear friends, will it profit us if we gain the whole world for the poor, but do not help them to find the way which will lead them to God and the happiness of heaven? (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 255)

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

How do we help the poor to find the way which will lead them to God?

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 love,

Come, Holy Spirit

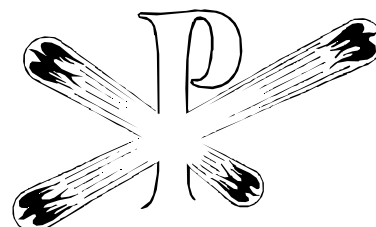
That the fire of Pentecost may breathe new hope into the hopeless,

Come, Holy Spirit

That we may lead the poor to find their way to God,

Come, Holy Spirit

Amen.



Receive the Holy Spirit.

Jn 20:22

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

June 12, 2022

Gospel: (John 16: 12-15)

Jesus said to his disciples: *"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. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you."*

Reflection:

As difficult as it is to grasp the mystery of Trinity, it is even more difficult to grasp that God loves us enough to share divine life and glory with us. Living the paschal mystery means that we are faithful witnesses to the God within. Sometimes rather than witnessing through doing good works, we need to witness simply by appreciating ourselves and others for the wonderful gift of God's presence that we are. The readings this week challenge us to become more deeply aware of God's presence in creation, in Jesus and in ourselves. Then allow that awareness to overflow in thanksgiving and praise that gives God glory. (*Living Liturgy, p.146*)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Gratitude is a good barometer of our spiritual condition. If you find that you are giving thanks to God frequently in your prayer, for big things and small; if you find yourself showing gratitude to others, your spiritual life is probably in a healthy condition. To give thanks is a sign of humility. If we are humble, we will certainly be in God's favor and His love, and the most valuable gift we can offer to the poor, will be in our hearts. If we have a grateful heart, we will see everything as gifts of God. May God give us the grace to be grateful for everything He has given us and to show that gratitude by generosity to others and to the poor. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 203*)

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

What fills you with gratitude?

Closing Prayer:

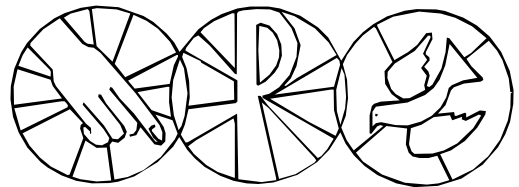
O Holy Trinity, truly you are a God of mystery,
give us hearts filled with reverence for You.

Truly you are a God of majesty,
give us hearts filled with humility before You.

Truly you are a God of presence,
give us hearts filled with awe.

Truly you are a God of creative power,
give us hearts filled with gratitude.

Amen.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 19, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 9:11-17)

The Twelve approached Jesus and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place." He said to them, "*Give them some food yourselves.*" They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we go and buy food for all these people." They numbered about five thousand. Then Jesus said, "*Have them sit down in groups of about fifty.*" They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

Reflection:

There is perhaps no more heart-wrenching sight than the malnourished and starving. These sights demand a response from us. We know there is food in abundance; we know we are a nation that generally overeats. We know that often the world hunger problem is tied into politics. We know all these facts. And so when we celebrate this particular feast and hear these readings we are once more prodded to respond. Our own share in God's abundant gifts to us demands that those gifts spill out for those in need. The gospel moves from the practical, tangible level to the mystery of God's abundance and excess; from our being in control to surrendering ourselves so that God provides all we need. (*Living Liturgy, p.150*)

Vincenzian Meditation:

Jesus was not only compassionate with his heart, but he was compassionate also with his hands, and he willed that the compassion should reach the people until the end of time. There are millions who watch pictures of poverty on our television screens and feel generous towards the poor. Their reaction so often goes no further than feeling. Vincentians, however, imitate Jesus in that they are not content to feel generous, they show their generosity by being a sign of God's love, a sign of God's generosity, and a sign of God's service, of his service in a special way to the poor. The most unfortunate people in society are those who have not had the experience of being loved. Before loving others, we must come to the realization that we are at every moment of our lives being loved by God. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p. 669*)

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

How have you experienced God's love, God's generosity and God's service?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you are the bread that fills the longing of our hearts,
may we be the sign of your love.

Jesus, you are the wine that satisfies our thirst for holiness,
may we be the sign of your generosity.

Jesus, your food strengthens us for the journey,
may we be the sign of your service.

Amen.



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 24, 2022

Gospel: (Luke 9:51-62)

When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him...As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "*Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.*" And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord let me go first and bury my father. But he answered, "*Let the dead bury the dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*" And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home. To him Jesus said, "*No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.*"

Reflection:

The gospel is about a journey, but the end isn't something anyone would choose. The end is Jerusalem and Jesus is "resolutely determined" to get there. Jesus was resolutely determined to go to his own suffering and death, because he knew that this was the only way to establish God's kingdom. Our own decision to follow Jesus has implications. For ourselves, the implications lie in terms of our dying to ourselves so that our own actions can also bring salvation to others and help establish God's reign. Following Jesus to Jerusalem, then, isn't simply about a personal response to a divine invitation; it is the way God's reign is established.

Vincencian Meditation:

Jesus, on his way up to Jerusalem, sent, "messengers on ahead of Him." If we are to be faithful messengers of Jesus Christ, we must have grasped well the message of God. The message of Christ is caught rather than taught. Our Lord always manifested the gentleness and humility that we his followers must try at all times to show. One cannot give a message to another person unless one knows clearly what the message is. So, too, with us who are messengers of God; we must be familiar with and know well what it is God wants to say through us. (*McCullen, Deep Down Things, p.488*)

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

How can we become better "messengers" of God?

Closing Prayer:

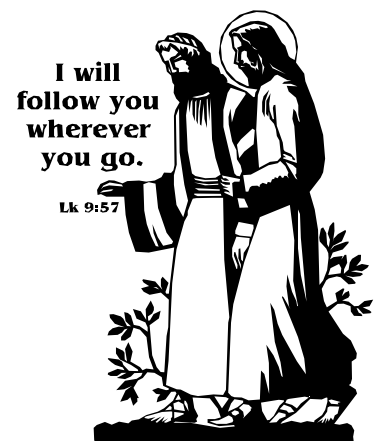
As disciples on the journey,
may we travel together in charity and service.

As servants of the poor and one another,
may we reach out our hands in charity and service.

As we bear each other's joys and sorrows,
may we reach out our hearts in charity and service.

As we daily embrace the call to greater intimacy with God,
may we reach out our souls in charity and service.

Amen



THE FEAST OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

June 26, 2022

Vincentian Meditation:

When we pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we try to make ourselves more conscious of the personal love which Jesus Christ has for each of us. Jesus said to us: *"This is my commandment-love one another as I have loved you."* Jesus had a very big heart. We know many big-hearted people. Devotion to the Sacred Heart means that we, in turn, must try to be big-hearted persons. When we think of generosity, we think of money, but there are many things other than money with which we can be generous. We can be generous in forgiving. We can be generous in trying to understand others. We can be generous with the time we give to others, and I am sure you can think of many other ways in which we can be generous to others. Jesus was generous with all that He had to give, and he had little or no money.

Discussion Question:

How can we become more generous, like the heart of Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus from February 5, 1872. At that time, an Act of Consecration was drawn up at the request of the Society and this act of consecration is renewed annually by all units of the Society (*US Manual*, p. 68). And so let us pray together:

Act of Consecration

Lord Jesus, Who seeing the cold indifference of the world, and in order to revive charity among all people, has unveiled before them Your Sacred Heart and revealed the infinite riches of Your divine love, behold us prostrate before You, we who form only one Family, by the bond of fraternal charity, scattered, it is true, throughout the world, but united under the standard of St. Vincent de Paul, and forming only one body and one soul in the common spirit of the apostolate of charity;

We dedicate and consecrate to Your divine person and to Your Sacred Heart this our Council (or Conference), and all the members who compose it, the poor whom we visit in Your name, the youth and children to whom we respond in order to maintain them in Your service; in a word, all those of whom we have the care, and all the works we have undertaken in various places for Your Glory.

Quite unworthy though we are, we beseech You to receive this offering in the odor of sweetness; inflame us with that fire, which from the depths of Your Heart, You desire to see burning more and more each day, in order that, filled with the tenderness of Your Heart, we may learn to despise things here below, to love and help our neighbor, by word and example, and that, among the vicissitudes of this world, we may fix our hearts on the riches and happiness that shall never end.

Amen



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