

СОШЕСТВІЕ

СВЯТОГО ДУХА



Spiritual Reflection Guide

Calling of Pentecost

May – September 2022



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Acceptance with Weakness

1 May
2022

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 5: 27-32, 40-41

Apoc 5: 11-14

Jn 21: 1-19

Following the crucifixion we know that the majority of the disciples had deserted Jesus, run away, abandoned him and were at a loss for what they should do next. Last week's reading told us that they were behind closed doors, hiding for fear of the Jews when Jesus appeared and stood among them, bringing his peace. As John's Gospel continues this week, we read of another appearance by Jesus. However, this time, the disciples have come out of hiding and have gone back fishing. A smaller group, only seven of them, led by Peter. In the "vacuum of life" without Jesus, they go back to what is familiar and safe, probably needing food and or money to support themselves.

And after fishing all night, they had no catch. In the early morning light, an unknown figure on the shore tells them to drop the nets in again, whereupon their nets were filled to overflowing. Something was revealed to Peter at that moment and he recognised Jesus. He jumps out of the boat and rushes straight to Jesus and, as so often in the past, they shared a meal together.

This is the same weak Simon Peter, who only a short while before, lived up to Jesus' earlier prophecy and denied that he knew him, three times. The same enthusiastic Peter who tried walking on water once before and who in this story jumps into the sea so as to reach Jesus quickly. The same impulsive Peter who raised his sword in the garden at Gethsemane. Jesus accepted Peter with all his weaknesses, had faith in him and chose him to be the foundation of the growing group of believers.

He wasn't a perfect man. He was just a normal person with all the limitations that all humans share. And that gives me great hope. Jesus accepts each of us in our failings and forgives us in the same way he forgave Peter and the other disciples. On the shore that morning, there was love, acceptance and forgiveness. There was also renewed faith and purpose.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

Imagine and share a time of personal revelation or a moment of renewed faith that you have experienced.

THIS WEEK...

Be aware of the presence of God in your everyday life. In the people you meet, the places you go and in your heart

PRAYER

Christ is risen, alleluia, alleluia.



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Belonging and listening

8 May
2022

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Rev 7:9, 14-17

Jn 10: 27-30

John's gospel this week opens with "The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice."

When Pope Francis first began his papacy he called on the world's priests and religious to bring the healing power of God's grace to everyone in need, to stay close to the marginalised and to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep." At this Christ Mass in 2013 the Pope went on to express that; "God anointed his servants, so they would be there for others, serving the poor, prisoners, the sick, for those who are sorrowing and alone," and he spoke of the sacramental oils as "not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid and the heart bitter."

In this homily, he continues to urge priests to not grow weary of people's requests and needs no matter how "inconvenient ... purely material or downright banal," such appeals may seem. Priests need to look deeper at what's driving the encounter: the person's underlying hope and desire for the divine." The Pope closed this homily with "the power of grace comes alive and flourishes to the extent that we, in faith, go out and give ourselves and the Gospel to others, giving what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all."

In many ways this gospel asks us, personally and as Vincentians, to the dialogue expressed by Pope Francis. Through the waters of our Baptism, we need to replace the word priest with Vincentians.

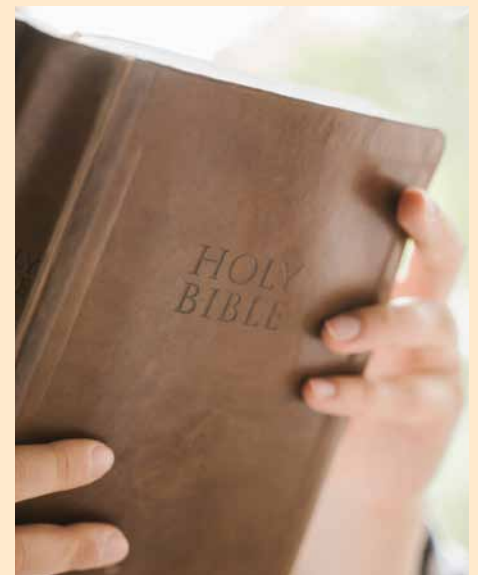
How do Vincentians carry the smell of the sheep?

THIS WEEK...

*All my life I have followed the poetry of love in preference to the poetry of anger. I will not change now
(Frederic Ozanam)*

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father,
May we be faithful witness to your
justice and your love living in the
service of our sisters and brothers.
AMEN*



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Fresh Heart and Encouragement

15 May
2022

FIFTH SUNDAY EASTER

Acts 14: 21-27

Apoc 21: 1-5

Jn 13: 31-35

Even in the enthusiastic world of the early Church, the apostles recognised the need, as today's first reading reminds us, to 'put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith'.

The same is true for all who try to live out their faith in the way that Jesus left us, through personal and practical concern for the wellbeing of others. The life and work of conferences of the Society is based on spiritual, not just material, realities. An essential quality of that spirituality has to be to give fresh heart and hope to each other, and to those who are experiencing difficult times and circumstances. That is very much what Rosalie Rendu advocated when she said: *A Daughter of Charity must be like a milestone on the street corner where all those who pass by can rest and lay down their heavy burdens.*

And this is also the pattern of advice she gave to Frederic and his companions in the early days of their commitment to the Society in 1833: 'Always remember, that if we had been through the hardships they have had to meet – if our childhood had been one of constant want – perhaps, we too, would have given way to envy and hatred, as I must admit have many of the poor in this quarter'.

The Vincentian Rule (3.12) expresses that it is essential for members to "deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality". Formation offers the opportunity to be renewed in spirit and understanding of our purpose. The Society is not just a welfare service or a transaction of assistance. The Society is driven in meaning and a deeper purpose, one that needs assurance, nourishment, encouragement and prayerful support.

How do we put a "fresh heart" into their fellow Vincentians?

THIS WEEK...

*Goodness is stronger than evil,
love is stronger than hate
Light is stronger than darkness,
life is stronger than death
Victory is ours through,
Him who loves us.
(The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu)*

PRAYER

*Father of all,
Bless and strengthen those who
work throughout the world
To bring relief to the oppressed, the
hungry, those without hope.
Give them courage. Keep them safe.
AMEN*



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Radical gift

22 May
2022

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 15:1-2,22-29

Apoc 21:10-14

Jn 14:23-29

Over the years I have gathered a number of books. In fact, my children think I am a little obsessed! Some books on my shelf are just that; Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Daniel O'Leary's *An Astonishing Secret*, Ilia Delio's *The Hours of the Universe* and Richard Rohr's *Universal Christ* are just a few examples. However, there are two books which stand out and I need to re-read many times, apart from the Bible; one is William Johnston's masterpiece, *Mystical Theology*, and the other is Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's final work, *The Gift of Peace*.

This week's Gospel from John leads me to Bernardin's book again. Jesus tells us, "Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you". This chapter of the Johannine gospel is set out as a journey or Jesus' way to the Father. Early in the chapter the reader is invited into a depth of faith, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God and believe in me"; this faith is inspired by hope, "I will do whatever you ask in my name"; and sealed in a Trinitarian love.

Cardinal Bernardin penned the *Gift of Peace* in his final years of life. He writes of a depth of inner peace that, I guess, one comes to through the pain and suffering, joy and celebrations of life. Bernardin writes in a simplistic but deeply personal language that captures the heart of one's final journey "home". He says, "When we are at peace, we find the freedom to be most fully who we are, even in the worst of times. We let go of what is nonessential and embrace what is essential. We empty ourselves so that God may more fully work within us. And we become instruments in the hand of the Lord."

The Gospel is calling us to accept such profound peace as a gift of God's grace. In our Vincentian journey to the Father, may we too be open to this gift so as to always enable our God's work to be completed within us and become instruments of his peace in the world every day.

When are you most at peace? With yourself? With others?

THIS WEEK...

*Make me a channel of your peace...
Francis of Assisi*

PRAYER

Father of all, give your children the wisdom to love, to respect, and to be kind to each other, so that we may grow with peace in mind and gentleness of heart. Amen.



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What we do understand

29 May
2022

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Acts 1:1-11

Eph 1:17-23

Lk 24:46-53

Dr Raquel Gur, a professor of psychiatry, neurology, and radiology at the University of Pennsylvania states: “People feel like they’re not as sharp—there is a sense of being overwhelmed.” Dr Gur has been conducting an international study of personal resilience during the pandemic, and she’s heard countless people describe similar symptoms of “being flooded with emotion” and “being dysregulated.” It’s an experience people are calling “pandemic brain”.

We, as individuals, and our communities are challenged to learn resilience today in managing our changing circumstances. Our Catholic faith tradition has produced martyrs aplenty, conditioning us to prize strength, inflexibility, constancy, and resistance, and perhaps it has left us struggling with resilience and elasticity, flexible, and the “not knowing”.

“He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”

We are encouraged by Christ to focus on what we DO KNOW, the eternally constant truths of our faith rather than brew in the quagmire of uncertainty and fear.

(Reflection by Joy Bowen)

Can I remember every day this week that I can trust that God is in all I do and experience?

THIS WEEK...

“What calms the storm in life is when we realize that...God is still in charge; all will be well” Fr Ronald Rolheiser

PRAYER

God of the oceans and allow me to pray so my entire life reflects my trust in you. In Jesus’ name, I pray.



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The 'Aha' moment

5 June
2022

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Acts 2: 1-11

Rom 8:8-17

Jn 14:15-16, 23-26

Mathematician Archimedes, 250 years before Christ, was credited with defining the Eureka moment when he solved a problem relating to water displacement while he was taking a bath. When he realized that he had his answer, when he finally knew, he ran through the town yelling, "Eureka!" Today, it is often called the 'Aha' moment. That moment when everything becomes clear, understood and real.

For the disciples of Jesus, that moment came at Pentecost. Following the death of Jesus, they had dispersed, fearful and seemingly without purpose, despite several encounters with the risen Jesus. I imagine they would also have pondered the promise he made that he would not leave them alone but would send them an advocate.

"I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of all I have said to you."

And then, gathered in a room together, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The sound of a powerful wind and the appearance of something like tongues of fire that settled on each of them, and the gift of speech was experienced. And in that moment, they knew and their faith in the risen Jesus was real and he was present with them.

St Paul in his letter to the Galatians, provides a list of nine fruits of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22, 23). These fruits reveal what the Holy Spirit is like and therefore what God is like.

The feast of Pentecost is also called the birthday of the Church. For when the apostles went out from that room, they began preaching to the world about Jesus, thereby laying the foundations of our Church. That day, they preached to people from all nations in all languages showing us that God's message and love is for all people, and that the Church was universal and home to all.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

What have been the 'Aha - Faith moments in your life?

THIS WEEK...

Be aware of how the Spirit is moving within you throughout this week and His gifts you use, in the service of others.

PRAYER

"Lord send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth."



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Guide you into all the truth

12 June
2022

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Prov 8:22-31

Rom. 5:1-5

Jn. 16:12-15

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”

When I ponder truth, a rather controversial Catholic theologian comes to mind, Fr Hans Küng. Hans Küng has been a major influence on post-war Christianity by any reckoning. A peritus for the Second Vatican Council, he then went on to publish several controversial books, including *Infallible? An Enquiry* (1971), which enraged the Vatican and caused him to lose ecclesiastical approval of his teaching at the University of Tübingen.

However, he remained a respected priest in good standing with his bishop. Throughout all the upheavals that the Catholic Church has undergone, Küng has been an outspoken observer, always speaking his truth despite the cost. He suffered for his truth, losing his position, some colleges, and his reputation. His influence has been great. What is not so well known is that, as a young man, Küng was a close friend and confidant of Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI). Over the years, however, they increasingly came to represent exactly what the other most despised. I love a quote of his- “That means that every human being - without distinction of sex, age, race, skin colour, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin - possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity.”

Truth is usually held to be the opposite of falsehood. The concept of truth is discussed and debated in various contexts, including philosophy, art, theology, and science. Most human activities depend upon the concept, where its nature as a concept is assumed rather than being a subject of discussion; these include most of the sciences, law, journalism, and everyday life.

For us, people of faith, Vincentians, we have a collective of sources to measure out truth with and the most important is, the Spirit of truth.

(Reflection by Joy Bowen)

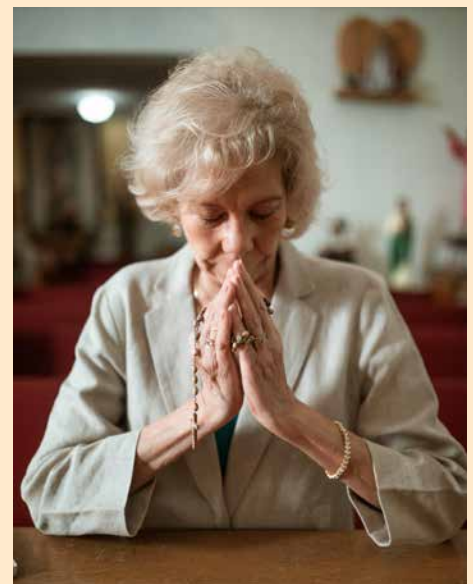
How do I reflect a life fully lived in the Spirit of truth?

THIS WEEK...

“... if we are to become saints, we must also wish to be poor. It is a characteristic of love to wish to be like, as far as possible, what is loved”. Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

PRAYER

God of Creation, show us how to live an abundant life alive in the Spirit so we may spread your Kingdom to all. Amen.



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Corpus Christi

19 June
2022

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Gen 14:18-20

1Cor 11:23-26

Lk 9:11-17

I remember as a young child, back in the mid-1960s, attending a Corpus Christi procession with my family which, I believe, was held at St Patrick's College at Manly. I remember that it was a big day out, not just because we had to travel right to the other side of Sydney, but because of the huge crowd in attendance and the large and rather grand building that was the seminary. Clergy in full vestments, seminarians, nuns and brothers in religious garb added to what was a spectacle, and a celebration of being Catholic. It was what set us apart from other Christian churches, the Eucharist.

Central to our faith and religious practice is the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of our Lord, each time we celebrate Mass. It was instituted at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday but the elements were often used by Jesus throughout his earthly ministry. Today's Gospel highlights this as it tells the great story of the feeding of the five thousand. This year we hear Luke's version which is basically the same as the version contained in each of the four Gospels. This fact also sets this miracle apart as it is not often that the same story is recounted in all four Gospels, and I believe this is the only miracle.

I once heard a priest describe the Mass in these terms. "Gather the people, tell the story, and break the bread." In Luke's version today, people had heard that Jesus was nearby and despite it being remote, a large group followed him, gathered together to listen and to seek healing. After a long period of teaching, Jesus challenged the disciples to feed the crowd, when they wanted to send them away to find their own food.

Finding just five loaves and two fish among them, Jesus took and blessed this small offering, and miraculously was able to satisfy the huge crowd. Jesus used the disciples there to go out to the people and to distribute the meal and even collect leftovers. The offering was magnified and this is what he does with our own small offerings. As disciple, too, when we offer up ourselves in faith, the offering, whether it be our time, our talents or goods, is blessed and magnified by Jesus to suit the need being faced or addressed.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

When have I experienced God's presence, empowering me in life's challenges?

THIS WEEK...

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

PRAYER

"You are My Lord and My God"
Jn.20:28



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Samaritan Opposition

26 June
2022

13TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

1Kg 19:16, 19-21

Gal 5:1, 13-18

Lk 9:51-62

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.... but the people there did not welcome him.... they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them... they went to another village.”

We are called to focus on mission and ministry in the here and now—those we meet every day, not on what was but what can be in the present time. Finally, we are challenged to look ahead, not back.

Theologian Fr Richard Rohr has provided insight into this passage, he tells us that a shift—from following Jesus and being a disciple to worshipping him—has made us into a religion of “belonging and believing” instead of a religion of transformation. And that’s where the significant difference lies.

Rohr says “A religion of belonging and believing is concerned about who’s in and who’s out, about what specific doctrine people subscribe to, about how they support the institutional church. A religion of belonging and believing says that we all must be the same, look the same, and spout all the same words and phrases. A religion of transformation, on the other hand, focuses on change. Changing ourselves continually to whom God is calling each of us to be and changing the world around us into a more hospitable place for all of God’s creation.

Transformation means that we can accept each other despite our differences. Transformation means that we can realize that all people are valued in the eyes of God. Transformation means that no matter what someone’s skin colour is, their heritage, their language, their sexual orientation, their hopes, and dreams, they are each valued by God and by us. What Richard Rohr is suggesting is much harder work. What Jesus calls us to do is much harder work, it’s what Vincentians do.

(Reflection by Joy Bowen)

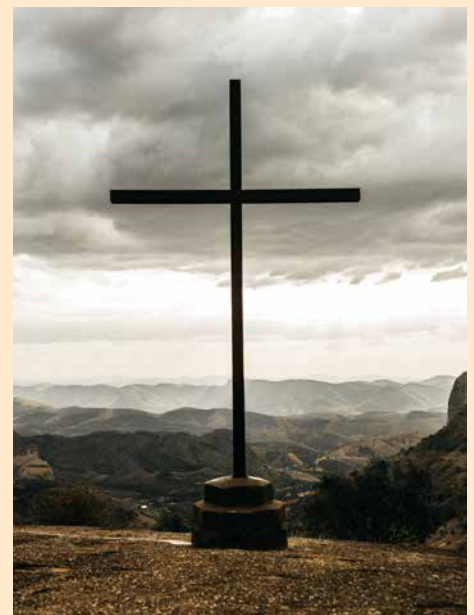
Can I be open every day to opportunities of transformation to be more God like?

THIS WEEK...

*“In my life I want to become a little better and do a little good.”
Frédéric Ozanam*

PRAYER

Creator God, give me your grace to change to be more like you. Help me so my entire life reflects my commitment to you. In Jesus’ name, I pray.



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A Lamp for my path

3 July
2022

14TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Is 66:10-14

Gal 6:14-18

Lk 10:1-12, 17-20

Preparing a way for the Lord is one of the themes in Luke's Gospel today. Jesus appointed and sent out seventy-two more disciples on a mission; to visit each place he intended to visit, and share his message of peace and to tell of the Kingdom of God. And they were sent out in pairs, the same model that Frederic and the early founders of the Society put in place for visitation. Jesus was aware that his work was not easy and mutual support and a sense of community was needed.

This is the only Gospel that recounts this missionary activity. Matthew, Mark and earlier in Luke's Gospel, Jesus only sends out the twelve Apostles on this same mission. Luke's version expands Jesus' mission beyond the twelve tribes of Israel and has the message being sent out to all people, the seventy nations of the world as described in the book of Genesis. It shows that the message of God's Kingdom was for all, and was not just for the Jewish people.

The Gospel also describes the challenges of discipleship. "Courage! I am sending you like lambs among wolves," he told them. He detailed what they should do when they weren't welcomed into a home or town, preparing them for rejection. He had them travelling light; without purse, bag or sandals. They were relying on the goodness of others who would hear their message of peace and of the Kingdom; and provide what was needed for the journey. It reminds me that living simply and appreciating the basics of life is also a helpful perspective to maintain in our daily life.

As Jesus introduced his mission to them, he said to them, "The harvest is rich but the workers are few." The work of proclaiming Jesus and the satisfaction of the work involved in doing that is not new to Vincentians. Neither is the fact that we can always do with some more "labourers", which is an ongoing concern for the Society.

When the seventy-two came back following the mission, they were joy-filled and rejoicing.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

What are my challenges as a disciple?

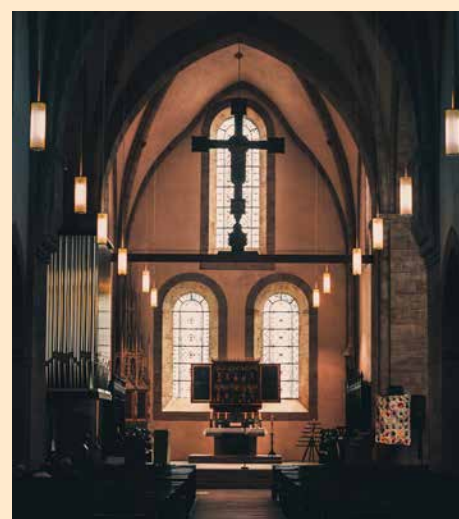
THIS WEEK...

"We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, and spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace."

Pope Francis

PRAYER

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. Jn 14:27



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Who is the good Samaritan?

10 July
2022

15TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Deut 30:10-14

Col 1:15-20

Lk 10:25-37

Did you know the Greek word used in Luke's Gospel for "moved with pity" is *splagchnizomai*? The noun form of the verb, *splanchnic*, referred to the inner organs. So, the verb is literally feelings in the gut. Suppose we found ourselves on the road to Jericho that day. Suppose we happened upon the Samaritan as he attended to the wounds of the man who had been stripped, robbed, beaten, and left for dead. What if the Samaritan asked us to help and asked for money to add to his own so the beaten man could be put up at the inn? How would we respond?

When we are moved by that feeling, Jesus says everything we think we know will get turned on its head. In our gut we know that God places no boundaries on who may work together to be a neighbour to the one left for dead on the road to Jericho.

It's easy to believe we would help. To us, the Samaritan is no one in particular. But what if it was not a Samaritan, but an addict, a homeless person? Might we hesitate to help? We may scorn the purity concerns of the Jews in the parable as obstacles to love of neighbour but are our own concerns so different?

Hopefully, we would help, no matter who needed our assistance. Hopefully, we would put our very real differences aside for the sake of the one left for dead. Hopefully, like the Samaritan, we would be "moved with pity".

Certainly, in the Society there are many examples of just this response. Like every "muscle" unless it is regularly used and transformed with prayer and reflection, we too run the risk of compassion burn out and judgement. Let's pray we can keep our hearts soft.

(Reflection by Joy Bowen)

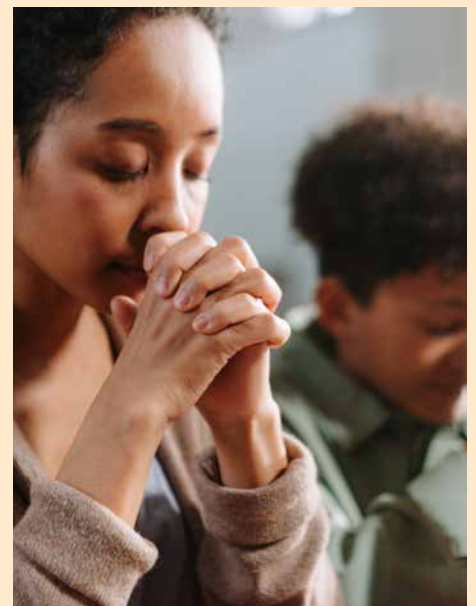
Can I remember this week that - there but for the love of God goes I?

THIS WEEK...

"I will always welcome joyfully any opportunity that comes my way to be of service to you."
St Vincent de Paul

PRAYER

Loving God, allow my heart to remain filled with love of others and my mind to be open to your limitless compassion. Amen



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Where do I stand?

17 July
2022

16TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Gen 18:1-10

Col 1:24-28

Lk 10:38-42

Jesus visiting Martha and Mary is a very familiar scripture story. I'd like to think that they were all good friends before this story takes place and were comfortable in each other's company, as we don't find Jesus visiting on his own very often like this in the Gospels. Hospitality for the Jewish people was an important aspect of their culture and both Martha and Mary attend to, and look after Jesus, but in different ways. I wonder which role I would have taken in the story.

Martha begins organising the meal and preparing the food while Mary stays at the feet of Jesus listening to his words, just being present to each other. When Martha challenges Jesus about Mary's lack of assistance in helping, she is rebuked. Jesus tells her that she is too troubled and worried about things, and that, "Mary has chosen the better part."

I wonder what that better part really is. Is it stopping and spending time in the Lord's presence? Is it being focussed just on the person, the guest in front of you? Maybe it is just being mindful and living in the present moment. I think Martha's issue here was not that she wasn't attending to Jesus but rather she wasn't preparing the meal mindfully and with the right attitude of generosity and service. She wasn't letting go of her worries and concerns, and preparing the meal knowing that it would be shared and enjoyed by the three of them in just a short while.

We all have tasks to perform around the home, the workplace and in our Conferences. Some are exciting and challenging. Others more mundane, boring and time consuming. Yet all the tasks on the to-do list are important and our attitude to how we complete the tasks makes all the difference. And while the work is important, spending time in prayer, reflection and quiet is also important not only for our physical and mental health, but also for our spiritual health.

"The Rule. 2.2, talks about the Vincentian journey together, towards holiness. This happens when you visit and dedicate yourselves to the poor; and attend the meeting of the Conference or Council, where shared fraternal spirituality is a source of inspiration."

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

What are my challenges in being a member of the Conference?

THIS WEEK...

*"Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words."
St Francis of Assisi*

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help us cultivate a Mary heart in a Martha world. My problem isn't the world I inhabit, but the heart that inhabits me. I make King David's prayer mine, "Give me an undivided heart that I may live in awe of your name." (S. Smith)



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Praying for our best interests

24 July
2022

17TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Gen 18:20-32

Col 2:12-14

Lk 11:1-13

I shared this reflection some time ago but think it is worth revisiting...

I was very fortunate to have been taught by the Sisters of St Joseph at Holy Trinity in Granville. There were many very good teachers there, as I am sure there are still to this day, but one in particular was Sr Antoinette Walsh.

Sr Antoinette was my Second Class teacher and not that I can recall everything that she taught me, I do remember these thoughts about prayer. One, it is very easy to be distracted in prayer and two, remember to thank God for his many blessing before asking God for something. Wise, simple words and much to reflect on some forty years later! The fruits of teaching can sometimes take this long!

This week's reading from Genesis highlights the best and worst of prayer. I love the intimacy in the conversation between God and Abraham. Abraham is cheeky in his conversation and so, I feel a sense of comfort to speak as he did. This is the God that walks with us through the joys and sadness of life. This is a God open to hear our thoughts and prayers; this is a God who understands our vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

However, this conversation also highlights how we pray. We are a demanding lot, aren't we? We constantly are in this bargaining conversation with God. "Please God help me get this lotto win and I will give half of my winnings to the poor!"; "Dear God, if you help me get this job, I will go to Mass every Sunday!" There is no doubt that we are always in need of God's kindness and help. Prayer, calling to God for help, is not a bad thing. In fact, who else greater than ourselves do we turn to in the dark hours? Today's reading reminds me that prayer is always an intimate conversation with our Creator in love. If this is so, do we not have more to open our hearts to than bargaining in a market?

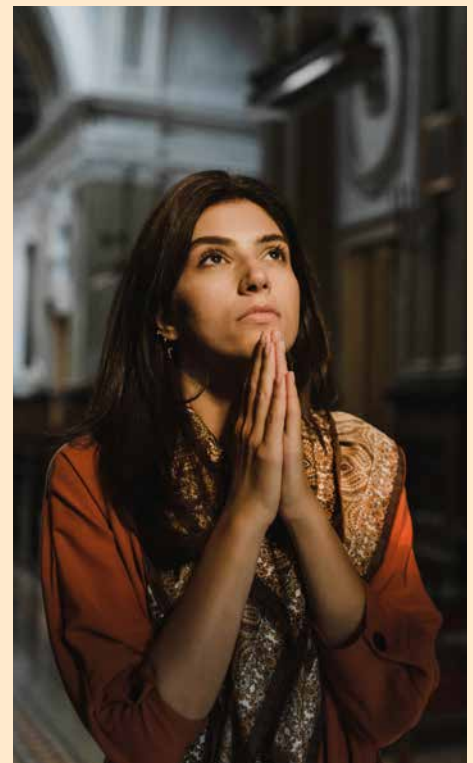
How do you pray?

THIS WEEK...

And as he was praying, heaven was opened... (Lk 3.21)

PRAYER

Lord, be still our souls that we may walk deeply in your presence. Amen



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What does success look like?

31 July
2022

18TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Eccl 1:2,2:21-23

Col 3:1-5,9-11

Lk 12:13-21

I share with you this wonderful biblical commentary from Liturgia...”In the entire three-year Sunday Lectionary cycle, we read from the book of Ecclesiastes only on this Sunday. The main point of this passage is this: after a long life of hard and skilled labour, people must leave their property ‘to another who has not laboured over it’ (Eccl 2:21).

In the gospel, Jesus illustrates this point with a parable. The rich man stores his harvest (his ‘nest egg’) to provide for his future. But sudden death robs him of his future and God tauntingly asks, ‘... the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ (Luke 12:20).

While both readings consider the storing up of wealth for the future to be pointless, they do so for different reasons. The Book of Ecclesiastes presents itself as the learned reflections of wise King Solomon. As a youth ‘Solomon’ sets out to discover what brings happiness to people in their brief life under the sun. He systematically examines many different pursuits thought to bring happiness but dismisses each of them: equally useless are fame, wisdom, pleasure, great accomplishments, wealth, and hard work. He concludes the best one can hope for is to enjoy the life that is given now: ‘Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, because it is now that God favours your works.’ For ‘Solomon’, the accumulation of wealth, like all human pursuits, is ultimately pointless for everything ends in death (there was as yet no belief in an afterlife).

Jesus also discounts the accumulation of wealth but for a different reason. The rich man thinks that riches will guarantee his future. But Jesus teaches that one’s life is not made secure by possessions (Luke 12:15). It’s not that possessions are not valuable. Rather, there is something more valuable: life. As the parable makes clear, life is God’s to give and to take away. It is best, then, to value what is most precious: life with God who alone secures our future.”

Our Vincentian work is important in this as we follow the ministry of Jesus of inclusivity, accompaniment and restoration. Such ministry to those we serve is expressed in a non-judgemental nature and to many this is life-giving.

May our success always offer those we meet the heart of our purposeful life in Christ.

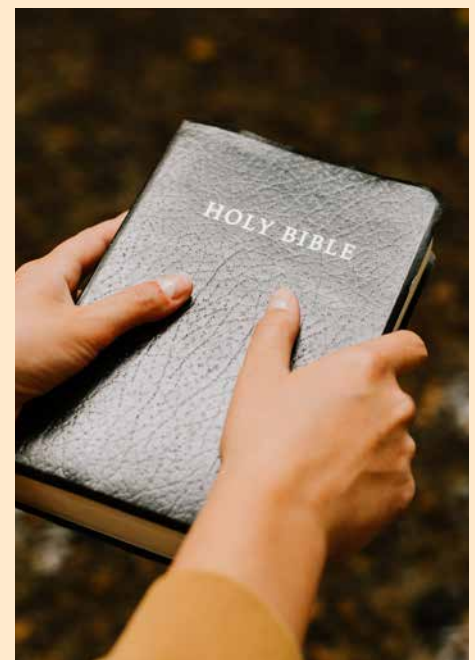
How do we measure our success?

THIS WEEK...

Nothing is more practical than finding God, falling in love in a quite absolute way... Fr Pedro Arrupe

PRAYER

Father, may our faith be stronger, may our hope be blessed and may our love for you and others grow every day. Amen



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All by faith

7 August
2022

19TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Wis 18:6-9

Heb 11:1-2,8-19

Lk 12:32-48

Over the years, I have been extremely fortunate to meet many of our members across country. I have listened to their stories of life but importantly of how they became members of the charitable Society.

The “excuse” on many occasions is that “Father asked me and how could I say no to Father?” This may seem, to some today, as being a strange way to say yes to 10, 20, 30 or even 40 plus years of dedicated service to those doing it tough in life. But I feel what people are really expressing is that it was a call of my faith, a faith requiring profound action.

The reading this week from St Paul shares with us a genealogy steeped in faith. It was faith that was ignited by a call. The call of Abraham to journey in a strange land and the faith of Sarah under impossible circumstances of mature age child-bearing. Such deep faith is difficult to comprehend and at times this faith journey does not always end with all the promises it espouses.

Such faith calls us to that faith that Thomas Merton prays... *‘My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.’*

God’s ways are not our ways. May we be open and ready to hear and respond.

How were you call to be Vincentian?

THIS WEEK...

“True spirituality is not a search for perfection or control or the door to the next world; it is a search for divine union now.”

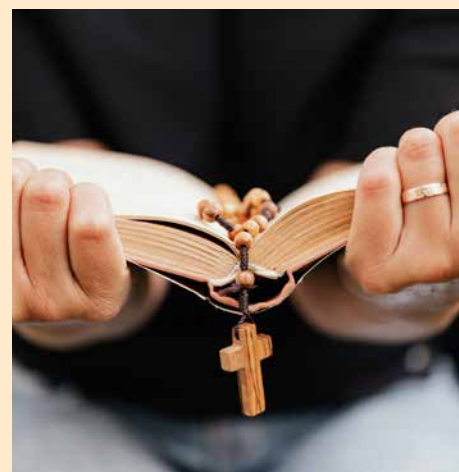
Richard Rohr OFM

PRAYER

*Loving and generous God,
So often, our world values
people and life in terms of money
and power.*

*Help us always to value
relationships and community as
essential to life.*

Amen



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Division not Unity

14 August
2022

20TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Jer 38:4-6,8-10

Heb 12:1-4

Lk 12:49-53

The strong words of Jesus in today's Gospel about division among people are appropriate in many ways to our Church in Plenary Council and heading into a Synod of Bishops on synodality. At a time of contemporary views of doctrine, decline in Church attendance, scandals relating to mismanagement, the horrific details of child sexual abuse and the disregard of radical inclusivity; it is more than ever necessary to stay firmly with the fundamentals of Christian life and belief.

Frederic Ozanam managed to resolve for himself the conflicts and contrasts of the stormy and divided period in France during which most of his short life was lived. He wrote:

"We are not blessed with two separate lives – one for seeking the truth and the other for putting it into practice" (Letter to Charles Hommais 1852) and elsewhere in a letter to Dufieux, *"Let us learn to stand up for our convictions without hating our adversaries and to love those who think differently from us."*

The Gospel words pushes us to an edge but this, I believe, was deliberate by the writer as Jesus is expressing that the challenge to follow his call transcends even the basic fundamentals of society, i.e. the family. For if one member of a family falls then loyalty to Christ is still assured.

Loyalty to the radical nature of the Gospel especially in our Vincentian ministry to those on the fringe will find us in division at times with each other, with some parts of the Church and with secular thought but, through these experiences, we find the true nature of responding in love.

THIS WEEK...

*"Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection."
(Heb 12: 2)*

PRAYER

He is the Truth. Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety; You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years (W.H. Auden, Prayer for the Time Being.)



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The gift of learnings

21 August
2022

21ST SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Is 66:18-21

Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

Lk 13:22-30

St Paul's words to the Hebrews reminded me of one simple fact; Learning is not always a glamorous road. It is often fraught with pain, frustration, humility and very uncomfortable moments. The 'Aha' moment in our earlier reflection may not come so easily as bruised egos are humbled, then the kingdom of heaven is opened!

I remember a time when I was working in a parish and the Parish Priest asked if I could prepare a short talk for a gathering of students at the local Catholic school. At first I jumped at the opportunity but as the day grew closer I was none the wiser as to what I was going to talk to them about. Embarrassingly on the morning of the talk I went "cap in hand" to the Parish Priest and simply told that I had nothing! I felt like a failure, it was uncomfortable and in actual fact I felt physically sick. However, the priest in a very casual nature said, "That's alright mate, I'll think of something!" And he did an amazing job and at no time did he humiliate me by telling the students that I was supposed to talk to them.

That evening, I learnt a very valuable lesson. When I asked him how he did what he did so easily, he simply said that he never talks to groups, including homilies, without a prayer for courage through the works of the Holy Spirit. A lesson remembered each day!

Learning, I think, has two natures. One is a learning of the head; the other is a learning of the heart. St Paul's words speak of a learning which transcends the pain, hurts and frustrations which is learning at face value. The true learning is beyond this for "it bears fruit in peace and goodness".

May we never be too old in continuing to learn the profound lessons of life.

When have you been humbled?

THIS WEEK...

"Do not believe that things will always be as they now are"
(St Louise de Marillac)

PRAYER

Father, open our hearts and minds always to your new learnings. Amen



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Humility

28 August
2022

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sirach 3:17-20,28-29

Heb 12:18-19,22-24

Lk 14:1,7-14

In this week's Gospel, Jesus is reminding the dinner guests to think beyond the need to get the best seats, for how wonderful will you feel if you are gushed over by the host and asked to move to the front and better seats. It nearly seems Pharisaic in nature!

These thoughts prompted an article which I read some time ago by Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI. He called it *On Not Faking Humility*, much food for thought even in this title! In the article, he contemplates diary entries of Dom Bede Griffiths who openly confesses that he is "no better than anyone else". However, a person whose life was led by contemplation and disciplined morality could they not find a distinct comparison to anyone else? O Lord, it's hard to be humble!

Rolheiser expresses that; *When Griffiths sincerely sees himself and believes himself to be no better than anyone else in this world, he is looking rather at his core, at the depth of his heart, where he sees that he, like everyone else in this world, is vulnerable, alone, fearful, naked, self-centered, inadequate, helpless, contingent, just as much in need of God and others as absolutely every other person on this earth, and, thus, no better than anyone else.*

This does shine a different light on the Gospel and the deeper meaning of the parable story of Jesus. He moves on to explain, too, that; *When a Bede Griffiths makes the claim that he is no better than anyone else and that he stands in need of God's mercy just as much as every sinner on earth, he is not faking humility, but he is not making moral comparisons either. He is speaking out of something deeper, namely, the fact that ultimately we are all equally helpless to give ourselves life.*

As an Australian Church moving closer to Plenary Council, may we listen to the deeper yearnings of our heart to accept our dependence on the "dinner host" (God) who nourishes and gives life and raises us to heights beyond our understanding.

Is humility an overrated act in our secular society or still very important?

THIS WEEK...

Love is the affinity which links and draws together the elements of the world... Love, in fact, is the agent of universal synthesis.
(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin)

PRAYER

Lord let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.



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Spiritual Reflection Guide



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Synod
2021
2023



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission