



Spiritual Reflection Guide

Year of St Joseph

May – September 2021



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



Dear Vincentians and Friends of the Society,

Welcome to this issue of the Spiritual Reflection Guides; it is always a privilege to share some thoughts with you.

These Guides begin near the end of the Easter season and continue through to the Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Highlighted are the feasts of the Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi.

Throughout the liturgical year of 2021 the focus is on the Gospel of Mark. This focus shifts in the last Sunday in July to Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. John's Gospel provides a different perspective to the synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. This difference is pronounced at the very beginning of John's Gospel in the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Theologians speak of John's Gospel as a "descending" theological view. In other words, for John, Jesus was the incarnation of the eternal God who descended to humanity. The other Gospels, in general, are known as understanding Jesus as born to a Virgin and ascending to the Father; an ascending theology.

With this in mind the Gospel of John is not viewed as a historical narrative of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but as a constructed framework to proclaim belief in the Messianic Jesus offering life in abundance.

This liturgical calendar year shares two very special Sundays. One for the feast of the Assumption and one for the feast of St Mary MacKillop. These feasts are generally celebrated during the week so it is wonderful that they will be given the solemnity that they, in many ways, deserve.

Let us also remember in our prayers the intercession of St Joseph as we enjoy a year in his favour especially leading close to our Australian Plenary Council.

Finally, I ask that each Conference and Council, if needed, update their addresses for where the Guides are sent. These can easily be updated through our Mission team at yvette.husseyin@vinnies.org.au

Leo Tucker
Executive Director, Mission and Spirituality
NSW State Council

Acknowledgements The Spiritual Reflection Guides of the St. Vincent de Paul Society NSW are produced by Leo Tucker

Text: Leo Tucker, Greg Ryan, Peter Gormly, Joy Bowen and Jack de Groot Design: Anjali Belani-Datt

Prayers and Scripture texts taken from St Pauls Sunday Missal, © 2012 St Pauls Publications – Society of St Paul, Strathfield. Published and approval of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

Love builds bridges

9 May
2021

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

1Jn 4:7-10

Jn 15:9-17

This week's Gospel continues the true vine narrative from the Gospel of John. The vine is a strong metaphor for community. God is the owner of the vine. Jesus is the vine. All those who respond to the call of God, become signs of the universal love of God, as Jesus did, and become grafted to the vine.

In October 2020, Pope Francis released the third of his social encyclicals, *Fratelli Tutti*. In many ways, this document is seen as the third part of the Pope's fuller vision for church and humanity. The first encyclical *Evangelli Gaudium* was restoring our relationship with God, then *Laudato Si* was restoring our relationship with the earth, and *Fratelli Tutti* restores our relationships with each other. This encyclical expresses Pope Francis' aspirations for a fraternity that transcends and crosses all boundaries of distance and culture and that, like St Francis, sows "seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his sisters and brothers".

This Gospel has Jesus commissioning each of us to bear fruit in the community of the love of God. This commissioning, similar to our Vincentian Commissioning, opens us to the radical ministry of Jesus. We are all co-responsible in co-creating a society that is able to "include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen". Love builds bridges, "we were made for love" and in this, the Pope encourages Christians to recognise Christ in the face of every excluded person. Pope Francis describes this bridge of fraternity in terms of the central principles of Catholic Social Teaching, respect for human beings for their intrinsic value and not for their use, solidarity based on their social nature and the primacy of the common good.

There is an urgency in the tone and expression of *Fratelli Tutti*, which I feel is similar to the urgency expressed in this Gospel and in revolutionary writings of Frederic Ozanam. Frederic wrote in a letter to his friend Ernest Falconnet in 1834, "I believe in authority as a means, in liberty as a means, and in love as the end." Our Vincentian tradition is echoed in the words of *Fratelli Tutti* each day in our service of fraternal and social friendship with those we serve. This, unknown to many of us, "holy" pursuit, is I believe, our dialogue of action and advocacy in alleviating poverty and homelessness. This dialogue may also seem at times too lofty an aim but in each of our members, our staff and many of our volunteers, it is an aim worth continuing and addressing.

Does your Conference reflect the image of the true vine?

THIS WEEK...

*"Each one of us, at one time or another, has heard that call."
(Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ)*

PRAYER

Lord, may we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

The Communion of Saints

16 May
2021

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Acts 1:1-11

Eph 4:1-13

Mk 16: 15-20

This reflection I have meditated on a few years ago but on a second read thought I would use again and would love to hear some of your thoughts on this special feast (leo.tucker@vinnies.org.au).

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Ascension. Sadly, this feast sometimes loses out as an “in-between” event, bookended by the “greater” feasts of Easter and next week Pentecost. However, the significance of this feast is important to reflect on as it provides the foundation of our new relationship as a people with our eternal God.

Forty days ago Jesus rose from the dead and over this time appeared to many people including his apostles. These appearances were not in some spiritual or “ghostly” sense but importantly in a gloried, human, physical sense. This physical appearance was attested to a doubting Thomas and numerous occasions when Jesus ate with his apostles. So when time came for Jesus to ascend to “the right hand of God”, into the spiritual realm of the Trinity, Jesus comes to his Father transformed in a perfected human body. In this way the realms of the spiritual and the physical converged and a new covenant or relationship begins.

This new covenant, drawn into the life and bonding love of the Trinity, offers us a place at the same table. Here our Creed, spoken at each Sunday Mass, expresses beautifully our faith filled belief as Christians... “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.” This place of esteemed dignity was not of our own creation or volition, but could only be gained through the life, death and resurrection of the Word incarnate.

The Ascension of Jesus into the arms of his Father is not the end of a life’s story but simply the beginning of new life. Pope Francis points this out in that the Ascension “does not point to Jesus’ absence, but tells us that he is alive in our midst in a new way.” Jesus’ legacy to us is a new relationship, and for Pope Francis this legacy is the heart of the Joy of the Gospel.

What does the Ascension mean to you?

What will your legacy be?

THIS WEEK...

*Father, into your hands
I commend my Spirit
(Lk 23.46)*

PRAYER

*Eternal God may your presence fill
me with a source of living hope.
Amen*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

23 May
2021

Birth of the Church

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Acts 2: 1-11

Gal 5: 16-25

Jn 15:26-27, 16:12-15

I have always wondered what it would have been like to gather with the apostles in the room at the very moment of Pentecost. What were they talking about? Were they terrified that the local Roman soldiers or even their own Jewish leaders were coming for them soon? They had just lost Jesus for the second time, how must their hearts been heavy with grief? Then suddenly came a storm where a tongue, as of fire, rested above each person and then that extraordinary event of speech talking to people but being heard in their own language!

I have an overall sense that the day of the “birth of the Church” began as an absolutely ordinary day. Each of the apostles would have rolled out of bed not expecting what the day would unfold for them. Their hearts would still be struggling with the loss of their dear friend, mentor and guide but their ears would be echoing his promise to them of the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit to come. Yet they were humans living in an oppressed society who only a few weeks earlier destroyed brutally the life of their mentor and friend.

The account simply begins with “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.” From this profoundly simple ordinary moment came an extraordinary event not just in the lives of the apostles but in the life of the Church and Christians throughout time.

The Pentecost event calls Christians to be inspired and passionate in the mission of the good news. This fire of passion carries on in each of us as we are called and commissioned to respond in love to those we serve in our communities and importantly as we serve one another. May we continue to be open to that same Spirit, responding in love to those we serve, living in hope of providing ordinary things of life extraordinarily well!

Can you think of a Pentecost event in your life? How has the Holy Spirit changed your world?

THIS WEEK...

*Embrace the whole world in a network of love
(Blessed Frederic Ozanam)*

PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people and inspire them with the passion of your love Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Know that I am with you always

30 May
2021

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Deut. 4:32-34, 39-40

Rom. 8:14-17

Mt. 28:16-20

When I wrote the reflection on the Trinity last year, I focussed on the metaphors I had grown up with, that attempted to explain this mystery in the simple terms we humans like. The shamrock and triangle, both displaying three connected or related elements while retaining a simple oneness. I recently read of another metaphor that highlights the sun, 150 million kms away from us but here are the rays coming through the window and together they provide the warmth we feel. God being the Sun, Jesus being the rays being sent out and the Holy Spirit is the warmth generated by both God and Son.

Stories and images are useful tools but they are never fully adequate. At the end of the day, the mystery of the Trinity requires an act of faith on our part. The readings today make that act of faith easier as they paint a picture of the loving relationship that God has with us.

Moses reminds his people (us) that, "The Lord is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath... keep his commandments so that you and your children may prosper and live long in the land your God gives you forever." And St Paul's words, "Everyone moved by the Spirit is a child of Godand it makes us cry out, Abba, Father," makes that relationship very personal. Matthew outlines our Christian mission in the Gospel. "Go therefor make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." Words of hope and promise that can really warm the heart and soul.

What images of Trinity are meaningful for me?

(Reflection from Greg Ryan)

THIS WEEK...

*"Happy the people the Lord has
chosen to be his own."*

PRAYER

*In the name of the Father, and of the
Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Do this in memory of me

THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

Ex 24:3-8

Heb 9:11-15

Mk 14:12-16, 22-26

Bread and wine, Body and Blood. From the earliest of times, they are all symbols of life; for without them, life would not exist. We find many examples throughout both New and Old Testaments of bread – manna from heaven, saving and sustaining God’s people, and of wine symbolising change and new beginnings.

Blood is also symbolic of the relationship between God and his chosen people as recounted in the reading from Exodus. To seal the covenant between God and his people, Moses cast the sacrificed blood towards them, sealing the covenant and forging a special bond between God and the Israelites. In popular culture too, blood is a symbol of a special bond created between people as illustrated in literature and media. Think of the saying blood is thicker than water in families or the concept of “blood brothers”.

Mark’s Gospel for this feast brings all these elements together as Jesus gives them new meaning. In celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples, dying on the cross and rising, He creates a new Covenant and fulfils the Messianic prophesy. The sacrifice of the new Covenant now becomes Jesus breaking and blessing the bread and wine, and sharing this meal with his disciples.

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”

And 2000 years on, those same elements come together again, as His Disciples we share and celebrate each and every Eucharist. “Do this in memory of me.”

How does the Eucharist sustain my Christian life?

(Reflection from Greg Ryan)

THIS WEEK...

*“Go forth, the Mass is ended.”
“Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”*

PRAYER

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.” Jn 6:57



The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed

13 June
2021

11TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Ezek. 17:22-24

2 Cor 5:6-10

Mk 4:26-34

The power of storytelling, to educate, illuminate, entertain and inspire is known by all great orators and writers. And Jesus was a master storyteller as demonstrated in today's Gospel. Mark tells us that Jesus would not speak to the people except in parables because he wanted them to understand what he was saying.

The miracle of growth in creation is used both in the reading from Ezekiel and in the Gospel narrative by Jesus, to explain what the Kingdom of God is like. Both passages depict great growth from small and simple beginnings, firstly with a cedar on the high mountain of Israel and then a mustard seed in Jesus' parable.

It is the smallest of seeds but once planted grows into the largest of bushes capable of providing shelter and rest for the birds of the air. In Jesus' time, the mustard bush was considered a weed that invaded farmer's crops and the birds that took shelter were also considered pests that could ruin the crop.

The fact that Jesus chose these two elements as symbols for his teaching, remind us that He accepts the ordinary, the lowly, and wants all to be part of His Kingdom. This Kingdom of God started off very small, with just a few followers taking shelter with Jesus. Over time it grew and more sheltered and found a home. It was a new vision of Kingdom for the Jewish people, one built on faith in God and not the kingdoms of the time.

How do I imagine the Kingdom of God?

(Reflection from Greg Ryan)

THIS WEEK...

Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).

PRAYER

Lord, give me the gift of simple faith in you, that my work and life will help build your kingdom here on earth. In your name. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

20 June
2021

How to navigate storms

12TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Job 38:1,8-11

2Cor 5:14-17

Mark 4: 35-41

There are some things in life that we can change by sheer will power. Such occasions give us the feeling of “being in charge,” of having things “under control.” We can change a reservation, we can change jobs, we can change schedules. But sometimes, when we struggle to change things, nothing happens. Sometimes a gale begins to blow, and the waves break into our boat so that it is almost swamped. We have no power or control, and we cry, just like the disciples, to a Jesus that “seems” to be unaware, asleep.

It is impossible not to hear ourselves in all of this. We are disciples in our boats on precarious seas. Storms arise. We are all spiritually powerless. As Mark reveals in this narrative, to experience any degree of deliverance in such circumstances one must choose - and surrender - to a response that is more powerful than any pathology we can draw upon.

What is there in us that “knows” this story and responds to it in such a deeply unspeakable way? Franciscan monk Richard Rohr reminds us in his timely book, “Breathing Under Water”, that how we pray determines how we live. How we first live inside is how we will deal things outside. Were the disciples at that moment of utter terror willing to find God in their own struggle with life’s circumstances---and let it change them? The challenge is not so much to discover forgotten courage in ourselves but to put our faith again in the One we trust to be more powerful than the storms that rage in our lives. God is big and we do not have to have everything figured out.

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

(Reflection from Joy Bowen)

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 allow me to pray so my entire life reflects my trust in you. Amen.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

27 June
2021

The Kingdom of God

13TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Wis 1:13-15, 2:23-24

2 Cor 8:7, 9, 13-15

Mk 5:21-43

Here we are again, watching uncontrollable life events impact on people, two women, their circumstances were beyond their control. Both reached at a breaking point. Desperate for help beyond what this world could offer.

This Sunday we have intertwined stories about two women, and how Jesus can bring not only physical healing, but also joy and hope, as well as establishing a community where all can be accepted. It's a vivid illustration of the meaning of this "Kingdom" that Jesus spent his life promoting. Fr Ronald Rolheiser unearths a particularly significant view, based on what the younger and the older woman have in common: "What these two women have in common is this: For different reasons, both are unable to get pregnant and give life; the young girl, because she dies at puberty, just as she has the radical possibility of getting pregnant, and the other woman, because the forces inside her that are meant to give life are damaged and haemorrhaging, making it impossible for her to hold a pregnancy. What Jesus does is give back to both women the possibility of giving life."

Fr Rolheiser makes clear, "giving life" here goes much deeper than just biological fertility. Jesus came so that we may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10). Life as God intended it, when we live in a world where justice and equality and compassion prevail, where we all have everything we need, and above all, we can each blossom into the person we were meant to be.

How do I reflect to others a life lived in abundance?

(Reflection from Joy Bowen)

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 so we may spread your Kingdom to all. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

All about faith

4 July
2021

14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Ezek 2:2-5

2 Cor 12:7-10

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus cannot work miracles, at least in this Sunday's Gospel. When he returned to his hometown, Nazareth, "he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them". What happened? Where did his power go? What part did his hometown play in this unusual situation? The words of Jesus might help here, the words he said to the "bleeding women" last Sunday, he often said them to people whom he had healed, "your faith has saved you."

What does it mean to have faith, what does sincere faith actually mean? There are many ways we can attempt to understand this, even in simple human terms. If a husband says to his wife, "I have faith in you," and if he means it, and if his wife says the same, then they are working toward real love.

Words from the Catholic Catechism express the meaning of the word "faith" as Jesus used it - "Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself (*Catechism*, para 166). The same goes for the faith we are talking about here.

Fr John Foley, SJ confirms: "The deepest meaning of faith is this: to have a mutual relationship with God. That is, *to receive God's love and respond to it*. Faith refers to an interaction between oneself and Jesus, a relationship steeped in trust and love".

What opportunities and deeds will I create this week because I have real faith in Jesus?

(Reflection from Joy Bowen)

THIS WEEK...

*"Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey."
(Pope Francis)*

PRAYER

Lord, give me the strength to receive your love and to grow my faith daily. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Trusting in God's Providence

11 July
2021

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Amos 7-12-15

Ephesians 1:3-14

Mark 6: 7-13

In the world we live, we hold a great deal of possessions, and often hold meaning to these possessions. We may not use, observe or admire the item, but we cannot let it go. Jesus encouraged the disciples to enter the house, and to stay there until they needed to leave the place. While they were at the house, the host will provide hospitality and meals.

What an expectation would that be in today's world? This reading speaks of trust in God and belief that God will provide. When families go travelling many of us will load the car with many belongings and will have financial resources to buy food and stay at hotels or caravan parks. Jesus asked the disciples to trust, you will be provided.

Jesus is asking us to be counter cultural. Firstly, to place our trust in God, and on our life journey, we only take what is needed. The disciples only took a staff and shoes, would we have the courage to only take the minimum in what was needed, and have no back up resources.

Jesus is asking us to completely trust in him, he will provide. We live in a society where being independent and self-sufficient is highly valued. Today, we often value being fiercely independent, dependant more on self than seeking help from others. Jesus is asking the disciples, and each of us to trust in him. To trust in Jesus, we need courage to hand over everything to God. Jesus is challenging us to live a life of simplicity and love.

In what way have you handed everything over to God, and placed your trust in him?

(Reflection from Peter Gormly)

THIS WEEK...

*"I must learn to combine self-denial with self-love."
(Late Bp. Geoffrey Robinson)*

PRAYER

Lord, give me the strength to love and accept the person I am, and grant me wisdom and hope *each day of my life.*
Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

“They went away to a lonely place by themselves”

18 July
2021

16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Jer 23:1-6

Eph 2:13-18

Mk 6:30-34

The focus of our readings this week seems to be of our relationship with God, and his love for us. God calls us to be united with him. I am sure we often get distracted being busy yet having a desire to develop our relationships with Jesus. We find many temptations and distractions that pulls us away in being connected to both Jesus and the broader community, and the people who are significant to us.

We usually find time to keep connected to the people who are influential, however, we may find we become overwhelmed with our work and do not have the time to nurture our most important relationships. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is challenging us to go to a deserted place to find rest for our physical body and our spirit. What a challenging statement for many of us. We live in a world where we are constantly being stimulated, and here we are being asked to sit in a moment of silence.

In fact Mark tells us that; “They went away to a lonely place by themselves”

When I think of a quiet place, it can be when I am sitting quietly in a church. However, if I am truly honest with myself, I feel fully connected to my spirit and God in the silence of the water. Where I am able to let go the stress and worries of the day. For me, sailing and swimming keeps me connected to the deepest sense of my being. The vastness of the water and the ocean, and that the ocean is a living space, this for me is the mystery of God, it cannot be explained but it is God in creation.

What do you do in your daily life to find times of silence or deep connection with God?.

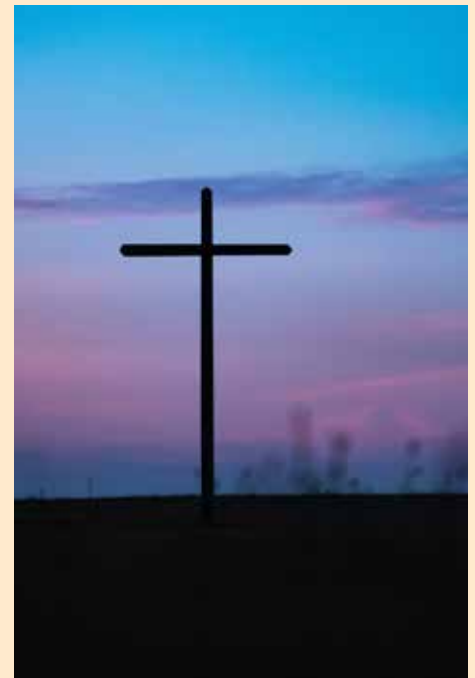
(Reflection from Peter Gormly)

THIS WEEK...

*We must accept finite disappointment but must never lose infinite hope.
(Martin Luther King, JR)*

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to see the things you see and grant me love and wisdom this day. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Being authentic

25 July
2021

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

2 Kings 4:42-44

Eph 4:1-6

Jn 6:1-15

Each day we are called into the life of authenticity, which speaks of how we live our call each day. In the reading from Ephesians “Lead us worthy of your calling to which you have been called”.

I am sure each of us, each day tried to live our life to the best about reality. This does not mean it is easy on the contrary, it requires us to live with humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance of each other.

We are all humans who strive to live a life of love and peace, to accept people who they are, even when they live differently to us.

I’m struck how we can hold back from expressing our true self, and then people will take a step forward to enter courage, the new world of vulnerability, it is our greatest strength, yet often seen as our greatest weakness.

Do we think that God is calling us, for some it might be a glorious, happy and exciting moment? For many people I am sure it brings about challenges that can be highly painful. To remain in the status quo, life remains the same but to make significant changes requires risk, determination, and the need to have a relationship with Jesus to take us every step along the way.

When I think of vulnerability it is the richness of humanity, it is why we love, and care for people deeply. The question we may hold, who deserves to be called and who is worthy.

Do I listen and respond to God’s call each day?

(Reflection from Peter Gormly)

THIS WEEK...

“God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another”.
(Henry Newman)

PRAYER

Lord, give me the strength to see the beauty in life, and that love is what holds me close to you.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Purposeful living

1 August
2021

18TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15

Eph 4:17, 20-24

Jn 6:24-35

"I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go living the aimless kind of life that pagans live"

I would like to share with you a story. There were three brick layers working very hard on a construction site. When asked "What are you doing?" the first brick layer stated that he was simply laying one brick on another brick; the second brick layer said that he was proudly building a great wall; the third brick layer stood back from what he was doing and looked around and said with great love that he was building a Cathedral!

This is a great story in understanding where people see their meaning or purpose in life. St Paul in his message to the people in Ephesus urges the community to always reflect on the deeper meaning of their faith in Jesus and that they must be renewed by a spiritual change of heart. The message of Jesus in the Gospel this week is very similar. He too urges the people to understand the deeper meaning of the loaves and fishes, not just the material meaning that they had plenty to eat with heaps left over.

One of the strong aspects of our Vincentian spirit is that of prayer. This is an opportunity in which, we "reflect for some time and open ourselves to the presence of God". The difficulty is that we are sometimes too rushed to really give this moment together to God. Our time of prayer together needs to be a time that provides meaning and purpose to our work and personal lives. Our prayer together invites us to gather in God's presence and so places our thought and actions into a different realm to the physical one always distracting us. Pope Francis reminds us that without being Christ centred, without achieving this as our aim, will simply become and work as a "compassionate NGO".

May we take the time this week to stop and listen to each other in prayer and know that in this space we stand together on sacred ground.

How well does our Conference or Council reflect, pray and share our faith journey?

THIS WEEK...

Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. (Jn.1.3)

PRAYER

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



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

8 August
2021

Seeking to offer love

ST MARY OF THE CROSS MACKILLOP

1 Kg 17:8-16

Col 3:12-17

Mt 6:25-34

Today's readings are about our ability to always prepare as we seek to offer love and meet the needs of those we encounter.

If we are open, we meet God. If we are anxious, we miss God in our world. This is key message of the Gospel today and it is the message that Mary of the Cross MacKillop took into her life. She had a disposition in her life to prepare so she could meet the unmet need and the other readings of today help us create such a disposition.

We prepare to be welcoming as Elijah advised the woman. As a widow with a young son, she would have been vulnerable to anyone who visited her. And yet she was always prepared and never ran out of food. In Colossians, preparation consists of having our relationships with those we are in conflict with resolved through the ability to forgive and in gratitude for people even in times of our relationships being under strain. And the final preparation is an openness of heart and mind to the other and the world. The behaviours where we are always worrying and anxious can distract us from the God who is right before us.

Where in your life have you stepped out of a comfort zone to assist someone different?

Where have we fail to do so?

(Reflection from Jack de Groot)

THIS WEEK...

"Never see a need without doing something about it"
(Mary MacKillop)

PRAYER

Father, may our love for you and others grow every day. Amen



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Mary of devotion and Mary of scripture

15 August
2021

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Apoc 11:19,12:1-6,10

1Cor 15:20-26

Lk 1:39-56

What is the significance of this feast of the assumption of Mary? Is it an important feast for each of us and our relationship with God or was Mary's assumption into heaven, body and soul, a "good reward" to Mary for being the generous mother of the incarnation?

Let us first consider what a moment the Assumption must have been for Mary! In describing this scene, some Church Fathers spoke of Jesus himself coming back to earth to take his mother and bring her to her heavenly home. St Pope John Paul II expressed that the Assumption truly was an event of love, in which Mary's eager longing to be with her son was finally fulfilled.

While artistic depictions of this triumphant event in Mary's life are often celebrated, not as well-known are the many pieces of art that portray her last moments on earth, just before her assumption. Yet such a depiction of the end of Mary's life—her moment between heaven and earth—can be found on one of the main doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

There Mary is surprisingly portrayed as falling, as if she were definitively letting go of all the trials and sufferings of this life and allowing herself to fall asleep. Indeed, she is letting go of life itself as she passes from this world to the next. It is just at this moment of abandoning herself into the Father's hands that the angels rush down to catch her and bring her up to heaven.

This depiction captures an aspect of Mary's assumption that offers us hope in the midst of our trials in this "vale of tears." This is the hope that God will carry us through our distress and lift up our heavy hearts. With whatever we're facing in life, may we, like Mary, fall into the Father's arms, so that we may have a more profound experience of his supporting us in our present sufferings and raising us to himself—both now and at the hour of our death.

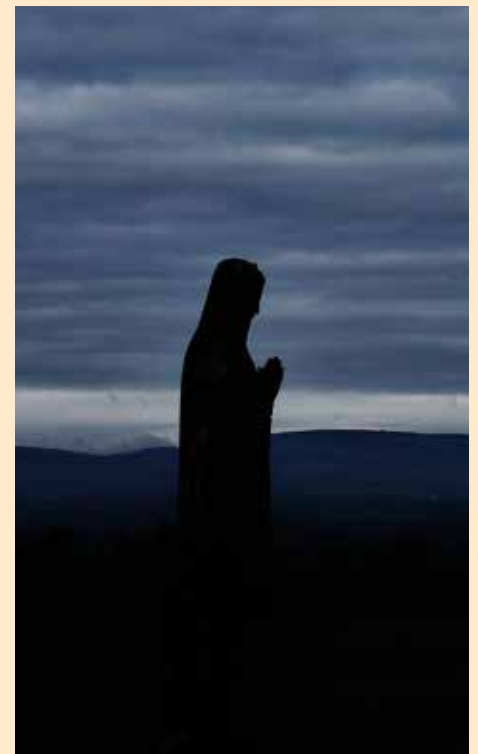
So take a moment right now and ask yourself, what burdens, troubles, and worries are weighing you down? How can you entrust yourself more to God's loving care?

THIS WEEK...

*"My soul proclaims the
greatness of the Lord"
(Gospel of Luke)*

PRAYER

*I will bless the Lord at all times,
the Lord's praise always on my lips.*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

We believe

22 August
2021

21ST SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18

Eph 5:21-32

Jn 6:60-69

It was decision time and many who had followed Jesus, turned away and left. He had been preaching about being the 'living bread' and telling his followers that, "whoever eats me, will draw life from me." The idea that Jesus was revealing required faith, deep faith that many who had been drawn to Him did not finally have. Jesus then challenged the Twelve and asked them if they were staying or going.

It was Peter who made the act of faith for the other disciples, "we believe, we know that you are the Holy One of God." They had been with Jesus and witnessed his healing, his preaching and his miracles, yet even those closest to Jesus didn't always understand the message and I'm sure had doubts too. But their faith was stronger than the doubt – they believed. This should give us consolation too when we doubt or struggle with an element of our faith.

We know that Christ's presence is not only found in the Eucharist but also in the Word. In Matthew's Gospel we hear, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." *Mt 18:20*. He also taught us that he could be found among the poor and weak, the sick and imprisoned, the lonely and the hungry.

As Vincentians, our faith helps us to overcome the challenges and the doubts, and to find Jesus in the face of the people we assist, the disadvantaged, hurt and lonely people that we see in our local communities each and every week.

When have I been challenged in my faith?

(Reflection from Greg Ryan)

THIS WEEK...

*"Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe."
(St. Augustine)*

PRAYER

*Christ with me, Christ before me...
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
(St Patrick)*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Exploring our true motivation

29 August
2021

22ND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Deut: 4:1-2,6-8

James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?'

"Listen to me, all of you, and understand there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

This is shocking stuff! Jesus, no stranger to controversy, challenges adherence to only the external rituals of the law, versions of religion that tended to warp human life and stunted personal growth.

We too can become very shallow if we only fulfil the 'obligations' of our faith and pay no attention to where our heart is. God tells us that we are important, that we are loved by Him, and helps us to live that deeper life and so appreciate the gifts below the surface. Jesus warns that our human desire to check off a list of virtues, good deeds, and right actions, is already missing the mark.

It is good to give thought to what is 'coming into me' and where it comes from, as well as what is 'going out from me' and where it comes from. Authenticity and happiness are consolations that go deep even if the surface aspect of life is disturbed. Self-knowledge regarding our motivation is critical.

Are there any intentions within me that are less than pure, how might I remedy them?

(Reflection from Joy Bowen)

THIS WEEK...

*Embrace the whole world
in a network of love
(Blessed Frederic Ozanam)*

PRAYER

*Lord, you invite me to look to the
inside - create in me a pure heart.
Amen*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Spiritual Reflection Guide

*St Joseph
Pray for us*



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works