



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Spiritual Reflection Guide

May - August 2025

Living
Pentecost
moments



Dear Vincentians and Friends of the Society,

Welcome again to the Spiritual Reflection Guides. I hope that these Guides provide you with much food for thought as we express our service in a ministry with those experiencing hardship and poverty not simply through materials challenges but also of the heart and spirit.

These Guides begin with four significant events in the liturgical calendar after the great Easter moment. These events are found in the eternal promises of Jesus, his ascension to his heavenly home, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the celebration of the Godhead of the Trinity and gift of Jesus in the Eucharist. From these celebrations we move to the Ordinary aspects of our spiritual lives through the parables and accounts in the Gospel of Luke, letters of Paul to the faith communities of Galatia and Colossus and various books of the Old Testament.

Our "Ordinary Times" opens the readers to several spiritual gems. Questions like "Who is our neighbour?" "Did we hear our call as disciples?" "How well do we live a purpose filled life?" "Is forgiveness central in our lives?"

The narrative of the Good Samaritan parable is uncomfortable. In fact, author Jill Levine expresses that the parables of Jesus are meant to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable". The enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews of the ancient world ran very deep. Jesus is teaching the first hearers and us to consider the possibility that all humanity is more than the sum of their culture, their racial identities, their personal beliefs, faith or values, their identified sexuality, their political and economic identities. Holding a place, speaking out and acting on issues of inclusivity and diversity are not easy, and it can be an uncomfortable place to stand. It is a stance of love that is expressed boldly throughout the gospels and within the words and actions of our Catholic Social traditions.

Pope Francis, in his recent letter to the Bishops in the US teaches that the "true ordo amoris that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (cf. Lk 10:25-37), that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception."

In this parable we are called to not just accept radical inclusion and diversity but to embrace and **transcendent of all labels and status** profoundly...why? Because they hold the grace and the very dignity of our shared humanity. Because everyone matters every day!

May these Guides open our hearts to the profound Joy of the Gospels.

Leo Tucker

Executive Director of Mission & Formation
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

All Spiritual Reflection Guides can be accessed on the Vinnies website, via this link <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/about-us/mission-and-formation/spiritual-reflection-guides>

For any mailing enquiries, contact mission@vinnies.org.au.

Acknowledgements

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Third Sunday of Easter

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ACCEPTANCE WITH WEAKNESS

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, probably feeling scared, abandoned and 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)

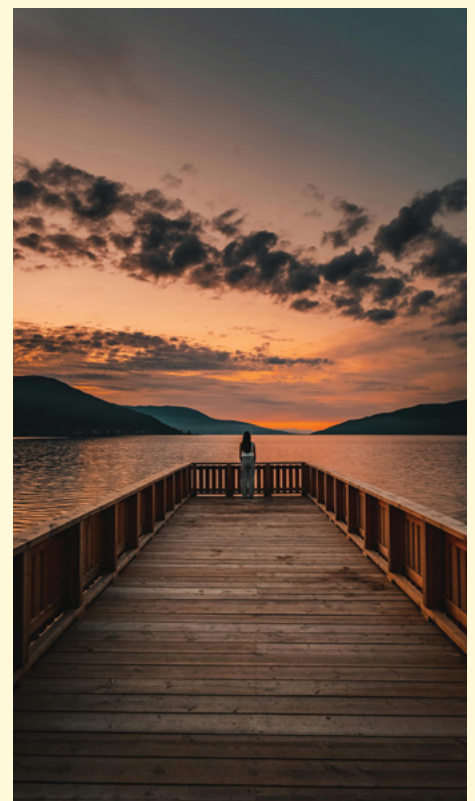
Imagine and share a time of personal revelation or a moment of renewed faith that you have experienced.

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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Fourth Sunday of Easter

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 brothers and sisters. Amen



LIVING WITH THE SMELL OF THE SHEEP

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."

This narrative expresses a hope filled image of Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" who intimately knows his sheep, protects them from harm, and guarantees their eternal security by virtue of their unique connection to his voice; essentially, it emphasizes the deep personal relationship believers can have with God, where they can confidently trust in his care and guidance, knowing that no force can separate them from him.

At the very beginning of the papacy of Francis, 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." The phrase "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them" also highlights the intimate nature of this relationship, where Jesus knows each individual believer deeply and personally.

In his homilies over the years, Pope Francis continues to urged priests, religious and really all people of God, to not grow weary of people's requests and needs no matter how "inconvenient ... purely material or downright banal," such appeals may seem. They 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 invites 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?

Fifth Sunday Easter

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FRESH HEART AND ENCOURAGEMENT

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'.

And 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 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 our 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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6th Sunday of Easter



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*



RADICAL GIFT

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; Richard Osman's Thursday Murder Club series, Daniel O'Leary's An Astonishing Secret, Ilia Delio's The Hours of the Universe, are just a few examples. However, there are two books which stand out and I need to re-read many times, one, is Richard Rohr's Universal Christ 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 in 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?

The Ascension of the Lord

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A JOYFUL LEGACY

Acts 1:1-11

Eph 1:17-23

Lk 24:46-53

The Ascension is very significant for me. Both my parents died, some years apart, on Ascension Sunday. Our former State President, Paul Burton, also passed away on Ascension Sunday last year, a day that we know would have been very significant to Paul. It's significant for our faith as it connects us to the communion of saints.

That the disciples returned to Jerusalem "with great joy" takes me a little bit by surprise. I've become used to the disciples being a bit slow to catch on to Jesus' lessons. Throughout his ministry, through the events leading up to his crucifixion, they seemed to be frequently perplexed and needed Jesus to spell things out for them. And when he returned after death, he had to give them a very concrete sign before they realised it was him. Following His Ascension, I would entirely expect them to spend the next week in confusion before they finally 'get it'.

Rarely (if ever) do we respond to the final departure of a loved one with 'great joy'. Normally there is great sorrow rather than joy, for some time following a death, and all we feel is their absence, and a hollowness. Over time, we are hopefully able to re-establish our connection with our loved one in a new way, a way that enables us to live without them physically present while still feeling their presence and their legacy (which may be small or great).

It seems as if every week I hear of another magnificent Vincentian that has departed this world. Earlier this year, we were saddened by the passing of Sr Carmel Hanson rsj.

Sr Carmel and Paul are a representation of 100s, 1000s of Vincentians who have, after decades and decades of service to those who come to Vinnies for assistance, gone to their final home. They, as with many others, and many Vincentians currently serving, did so with great joy and energy.

(Reflection by Leonie Duck)

How can we best honour the legacy of past Vincentians?

THIS WEEK...

Life is changed, not ended.

PRAYER

May those who grieve, find solace in enduring bonds with those they have lost, Amen



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Pentecost Sunday

THIS WEEK...

"The Holy Spirit does not proceed by slow, laborious efforts."

St. Ambrose

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, energise me with your presence. Amen



BIRTHDAY REJUVENATION

Acts 2: 1-11

Rom 8:8-17

Jn 14:15-16, 23-26

Happy Birthday! Do you remember the excitement of looking forward to your birthday - when they were in single digits? The energy you woke up with when the day finally arrived, knowing the day would be filled and there was so much for you to do? Perhaps you see it in children around you still.

The birth of the church must be by far, the most energetic and energising story recorded for us in Scripture. Violent wind, carefully dispersed fire and bewildering new skills for all present.

A lot can be said for bringing energy back into our birthdays. Each one could be our last (hopefully not of course) and ideally should be celebrated as much as when we were 5 or 6 or 7 or 8.

As with birthdays, have we lost a lot of the energy associated with being filled with the Holy Spirit? Is there a fire in us? Or are we just "going through the motions"?

Preaching on Pentecost a couple of years ago, Fr Richard Rohr, wrote: "We can recognise people who have had a second baptism in the Holy Spirit. They tend to be loving. They tend to be exciting. They want to serve others, and not just be served themselves. They forgive life itself for not being everything they once hoped for. They forgive their neighbors. They forgive themselves for not being as perfect as they would like to be."

If we are in need of rejuvenation, Pentecost may be a great opportunity for an injection of the Holy Spirit, to be re-inspired, to reclaim respiration in our day-to-day lives.

(Reflection by Leonie Duck)

What areas of my life might benefit from an injection of the Holy Spirit?

The Most Holy Trinity

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GOD'S SELF-COMMUNICATING LOVE

Prov 8:22-31

Rom. 5:1-5

Jn. 16:12-15

The gospel of John this week presents the bonding love and engaging relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit; this deeply held faith of three persons in one God. This faith is reflected in all aspects of our prayers, readings and liturgies in the Church. In Celtic Spirituality the Threeness of God is evident in many signs, symbols and storytelling expressing unity of nature. In more recent times we tend not to speculate about the nature of God, but rather, following the example of the mystics, to be alert to the sacred in all aspects of life, particularly in people. For Blessed Frederic Ozanam this sacred gift was always recognised in the dignity of those experiencing deep poverty for he knew them as people formed in the image and likeness of this Trinitarian God.

Understanding the mystery of the Trinity has irritated theologians throughout time. From simplistic models like the three-leaf clover to parts of Aquinas' expansive work in the Summa Theologica, the understanding has and will continue to be a mystery known only through the eyes of faith. Even to speak of the three "persons" of the one God we have a need to use the language of "persons" because we speak of the bond of love of persons and the concept of love needs to be engaging with a being or person to be understood as love.

At the end of the day what I do know is that God's "self-communicating" love abides with us always, transcendentally and immanently.

The Society Nationally has been working on a document placing foundationally a Trinitarian language as espousing Jesus' ministry of radical inclusivity, restoration and accompaniment, as well as our Catholic Social Teaching principles. This sense of Jesus' service echoes the images of a God of compassionate love. May our lives together continue to be blessed in this profound mystery of God, opening us always to God's "self-communicating" love enabling us to respond compassionately to all we meet.

What does "inclusivity and diversity" mean for our Conference or Council?

THIS WEEK...

I arise today in God's strength, invoking the Trinity believing in Threeness, confessing the oneness of creation's Creator... (Book of Kells)

PRAYER

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen



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Corpus Christi

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ



THIS WEEK...

Through him, and with him, and in him, in the unity with the Holy Spirit (Doxology)

PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.



EUCHARIST COVENANT

Gen 14:18-20

1Cor 11:23-26

Lk 9:11-17

The first reading this week is a brief reading from the book of Genesis. It is an account of the priest king Melchizedek blessing the gifts of bread and wine. This was a ritual in the Melchizedek tradition although it was possible that this priest king also prepared other gifts for other deities, on this occasion was for especially for the one God of Israel.

This account of blessing with simple gift predates Jesus and the Passover meal by almost 1400 years. Today a similar ceremony occurs with simple gift of bread and wine but there is an enormous difference.

As a Christian community, our foundational story is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the paschal mystery. Each time we celebrate Eucharist we get in touch with our foundation story, which draws us into communion and relationship with Christ.

Although the ceremony of Melchizedek was about a covenant, one between the God of Israel and one with Abram, our Eucharistic covenant through this paschal mystery is of eternal life.

The gospel account of the five loaves and two fish provides an extraordinary dimension in an ordinary event. The ordinariness is Jesus gathered with a crowd of people in conversations and ministry, but it is made extraordinary, or holy, through the narrative of the faith journey and the action of the blessing and breaking of bread. Both dimensions are important, the ordinary and the extraordinary. Pope Francis expresses these dimensions as he states that "the Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak". Fundamentally Christians have simply viewed the Eucharist as one dimensional, in the extraordinary realm, which in many ways is completely understandable but this then makes it affordable only to those always in a state of grace or perfect. Humanity, by our very nature, needs to be touched by the ordinary and it is in this ordinariness that the Eucharist becomes nourishing for the weak.

In our work are we nourishing the weak and vulnerable?

Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul

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THE NEED FOR COMPLEMENTS

Acts 12:1-11

2Tim 4:6-8, 17-18

Matt 16:13-19

The church recognises each of these Saints separately with their own feast day (The Chair of St Peter in February, and the Conversion of Paul in January). Today's solemnity, it would seem is for us to focus on the connection between the two of them.

They did not live in one another's world. Peter was a disciple of Jesus, originally from Galilee. Paul, from Tarsus, would never have met Jesus. Peter was a simple man, a fisherman, eager and passionate, but something of a loose cannon at times. Paul was a theologian, also deeply committed to his work, but prior to his conversion was an apostle to the gentiles.

Both however, were flawed, they both made errors. Both were weak and frail in character but were called by God to follow and serve him. Just like us.

God doesn't ask for perfect men and women. In today's Gospel, and elsewhere, he does ask us to be forgiving human beings.

Peter and Paul were different, but complementary. Peter, the "rock", represents order and structure. Paul represents speculation, theology and evangelisation. John Henry Newman says together they give the church its energy, impetus and life. Each needs the other. Without the Pauline elements, Newman says, the Petrine would become stony and lifeless. Without the Petrine element, the Pauline way would devolve into a debating society and potential chaos. When the complementary elements embrace, the church is dynamically aligned.

I see a parallel with the Society. On the back of a strong history, our vast network of members contribute unique qualities and talents and a remarkable willingness to give. Employees in the organisation bring necessary experience and knowledge of current best practice and a desire to make a difference in the world.

All of us bring compassion and a belief in the dignity of the human person. Together we are a dynamic force, dedicated to bettering the lives of those we assist

(Reflection by Leonie Duck)

How can we best embrace the complementarity of the Society?

THIS WEEK...

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness." John Steinbeck

PRAYER

Lord, we know we are not perfect. Grant us forgiving hearts and teach us to not give up. Amen.



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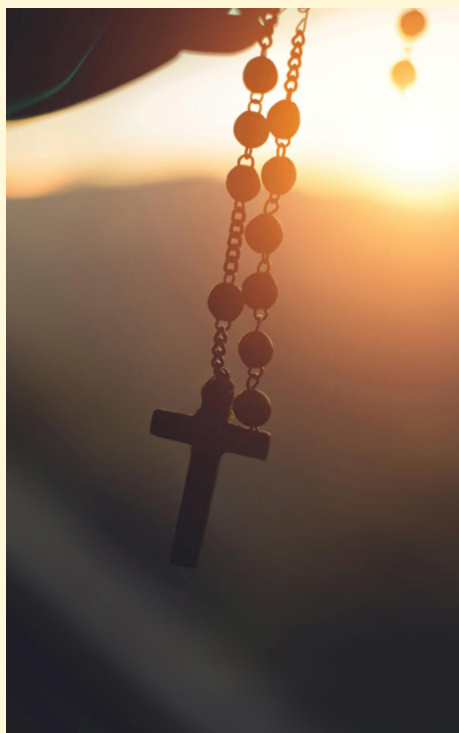
14th Sunday Ordinary Time

THIS WEEK...

"We are companions on the journey. And in the love we bear, is the hope we share."
Carey Landry

PRAYER

Lord, may I be a blessing of peace, love and hope to those I encounter. Amen.



PEACE, LOVE AND HOPE

Is 66:10-14

Gal 6:14-18

Lk 10:1-12,17-20

So much of this week's Gospel is reflective of the work of St Vincent de Paul Society members. Beginning with the seventy-two being sent out in pairs. I think of seventy-two as being six times the original 12 sent out by Jesus. For me, it brings to mind the conference structure of the Society. The original unit set up by Frederic and friends, very quickly became insufficient to meet the need, and the worldwide spread of conferences began.

We go out in pairs – not only for safety, but the companionship and charism we share is integral to our Vincentian service. Working in pairs also provides our opportunity for Apostolic reflection (exploration of where Christ was present in our encounter) within the bounds of confidentiality.

It often feels as though we are going out with insufficient means – not enough in our purse; a haversack that we wished could contain at least double. It can even feel at times that we are lambs being sent to wolves, endeavouring to meet an endless need.

Yet we strive to enter every encounter with a message of peace. And love. And in this jubilee year of hope, in a world that seems to need it more than ever, we also strive to share hope.

The Rule (1.7) reminds us that "Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit guide them during their visits and make them channels for peace and joy"

We recalled at Pentecost, only a few weeks ago, that there are many fruits of the Spirit – a very fitting reflection of the Society, made up of members, volunteers and employees, all contributing their own unique fruits, in every encounter, for the benefit of those we assist and one another.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit leading our way, we are hopefully able to return as the disciples did, excited and satisfied with our success, knowing that while we may not have met every need, we have lovingly improved the lives of those we encountered.

(Reflection by Leonie Duck)

What helps me to enter each encounter with peace, love and hope?

15th Sunday Ordinary Time

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LIVE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE BY SERVING CHRIST

Deut 30:10-14

Col 1:15-20

Lk 10:25-37

This week's gospel reading is very connected to our Vincentian mission. Within our mission statement are the words "live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor". How do we do this? What does this mean for us?

In the reading from the Colossians it mentions that Christ is the head of the body (and we are all part of the body of Christ). And the gospel proclaims, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... and love your neighbour as yourself".

This is deeply pertinent to us as Vincentians. If we are to look at the parables given to us in scripture in particular the one presented to us this week with the Good Samaritan story it delves into this notion of who is our neighbour?

We have already explored that Christ is the head of the Body – and therefore we are all connected. So, when we talk about serving Christ, we are talking about serving one another out of an extension of love. Who is our neighbour? Everyone we meet. The stranger on the street, the colleagues we work with, our fellow Vincentians, our family and friends, the people we assist – everyone, as we are all connected, we are all part of this body. So, serving Christ, is simply serving humankind, with love.

Frederic explains it in a very special way "My desire is to enfold the world in a network of charity". Love thy neighbour. We are all connected.

(Reflection by Corinne Lindsell)

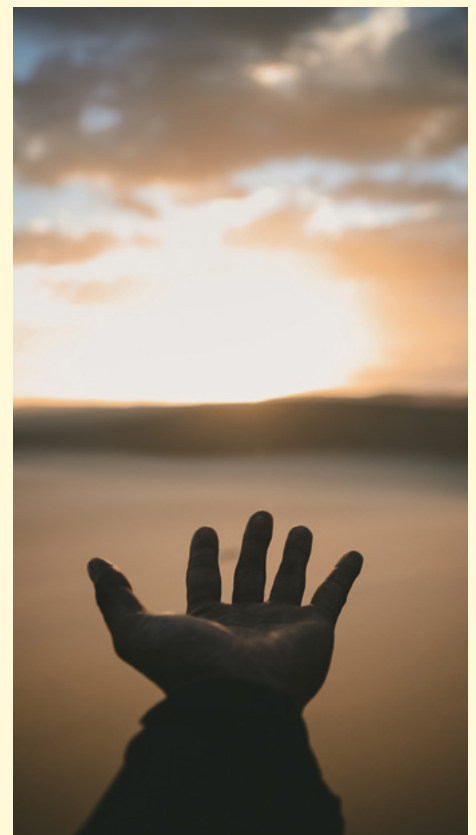
How do you embrace the network of charity Frederic desired to see?

THIS WEEK...

"We are hardwired for connection"
Brene Brown

PRAYER

*Lord, open my eyes to see the
needs of my neighbour*



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16th Sunday Ordinary Time

THIS WEEK...

"Knowledge of the poor ... is by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes". Frederic Ozanam

PRAYER

Lord, teach us to be present to you and to each other all our days, Amen.



STOP. LOOK. LISTEN

Gen 18:1-10

Col 1:24-28

Lk 10:38-42

We have a beautiful part of scripture presented to us this week. The Martha and Mary debate.

As Vincentians, we deeply care about the practical assistance we can give someone as a hand up out of their current crisis or circumstances where they have very little and need something to help them through. But how often do we offer the practice of being present?

In this week's gospel, Jesus points out that Mary who chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and listened deeply to everything He said was actually something incredibly profound.

Martha was doing everything practical as a wonderful host and yet missed the opportunity to just be present.

Are we doing that sometimes when we visit those we assist? Are we thinking about all the practical ways the Society can and should help the person in front of us? Or are we providing them with unconditional regard and care by listening, deeply listening?

This is a very special and sacred part to a Vincentian visitation.

Next time you're providing support to someone, stop – and think 'Am I being practical or present?' that's not to say you won't be providing practical support, but you are able to look deeply at the true purpose of this human to human connection. And the ability to listen to the person in front of you as Jesus says to Martha that Mary, by listening "has chosen the better part..."

(Reflection by Corinne Lindsell)

Where have you experienced being present or someone being present to you?

17th Sunday Ordinary Time

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LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.

Gen 18:20-32

Col 2:12-14

Lk 11:1-13

One thing we often hear within the Society is that people feel so underequipped to become a spiritual advisor in their conference or council. And yet it is something that is so lifegiving and fruitful as it's a pure extension of faith in action of our Vincentian spirituality.

We don't have to be an ordained clergyman or religious sister to be able to share this deep beautiful role within the Society. We merely have to be able to delve into the richness of the Vincentian way, the spirituality, the heritage and the prayerful nature of way we work.

Our gospel reading this week shows that even His disciples struggled in the whole prayer department. And His response was to gift us a prayer we know today as "The Lord's Prayer".

He gives us a model of praying that we can use today beyond reciting the particular prayer.

We call upon the Heavenly realm, just as we have in our own logo, with the Hand of Christ that blesses our work. We ask for our daily needs for us and those in around us, just like the how we provide to those in need. We ask for forgiveness of ourselves and others, just as we withhold all judgment to enable us to tend to the needs of those we serve.

We all have capacity to take on this beautiful role as spiritual advisor, because even our simplest of prayers, in the Lord's Prayer – is something we do every day in our good works.

(Reflection by Corinne Lindsell)

What are some of the most prayerful moments you have experienced as a Vincentian?

THIS WEEK...

*"Prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God."
Teresa of Avila*

PRAYER

Lord, Give us this day our daily bread, and may we always share with those in need. Amen



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18th Sunday Ordinary Time

THIS WEEK...

"Go to the poor you will find God"
St Vincent de Paul

PRAYER

Lord, help us to serve with hearts open to true accompaniment, free from judgment, and full of your grace. Amen



ACCOMPANIMENT TO THOSE WE SERVE

Eccl 1:2,2:21-23

Col 3:1-5,9-11

Lk 12:13-21

In this week's gospel, we see Jesus responding to a man seeking help in a dispute over inheritance. Rather than being an authority here, Jesus simply warns against greed and the illusion that possessions bring security. To go further into this, He shares a parable of "the rich fool" who stores up wealth for himself but neglects his relationship with others.

As Vincentians, this piece of scripture invites us to reflect on how we accompany those in need. It is not easy to stay out of judgement of others. And we are often supporting those who struggle with poverty, those who may seem to be in this cycle, or even those who, like the rich man, place their trust in material wealth. Yet we are called to something deeper: to journey with people, not from a place of superiority, but from a heart of compassion and humility.

True accompaniment means seeing the dignity in those we serve, walking alongside them without judgment, and recognising that their struggles whether financial, emotional, or spiritual are not for us to measure but to offer hope and support wherever we can. Our Patron, St. Vincent de Paul modelled that service must come from the heart, not from a place of charity alone, but of true solidarity.

May we always be mindful that our mission is not simply to give but to be present, to listen, and to serve in hope. Let us not store up treasures of self-importance, power or pride but instead cultivate hearts rich in mercy, presence, and humility.

(Reflection by Corinne Lindsay)

How have you been able to accompany someone in deep need?

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OUR FAITH JOURNEY

Wis 18:6-9

Heb 11:1-2,8-19

Lk 12:32-48

In last week's Gospel from Luke, we heard about the rich man planning ahead, for how he was going to increase his grain storage, wealth and look forward to a long future of good times. But God had other plans for him! The theme of being ready because we do not know the time or the hour that the Master is coming, continues in today's Gospel.

So what does being ready mean? Having faith in God and letting that faith direct our priorities and purpose in life means, we are ready to greet the master when he returns. The rich man valued his property and belongings more than anything else; but people of faith have more a focus on the quality of their lives rather than their possessions.

In our second reading today from Paul's letter to the Hebrews we are told that, "only faith can guarantee the blessings we hope for." The faith journeys of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob highlight the blessings they received through that faith and how that developed through their countless descendants. Faith gave Abraham the strength to trust in the Lord. It gave him the strength to set out on his unknown journey and to believe in the promises of his God. It gave him the strength to make the hard decisions and to trust in God.

Jesus tells us at the beginning of today's Gospel that we don't have to be afraid because our loving God has already given us the kingdom. So let us have faith that God has already provided for all our needs so we don't need to worry about them. Instead, let our focus be on God and where He is leading us on our journey through life.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

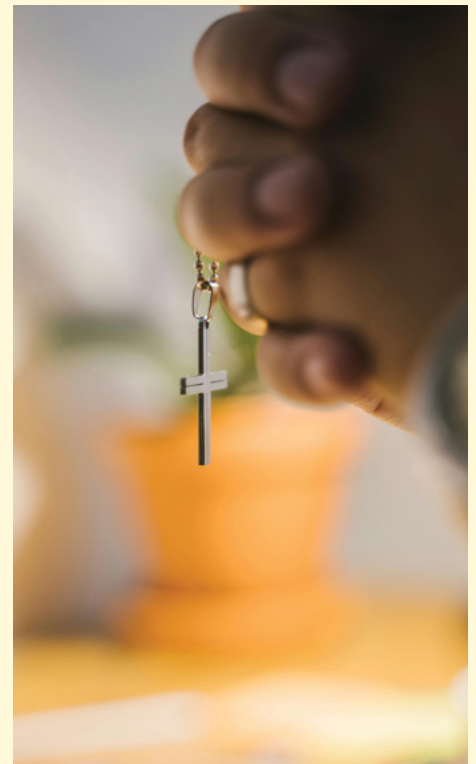
When has my faith empowered me to make the hard decision or change my life direction?

THIS WEEK...

Reflect on the treasures God has given you. What is the treasure you hold most dear?

PRAYER

*Lord, I humbly come before you,
seeking to strengthen my faith.
Amen.*



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20th Sunday Ordinary Time

THIS WEEK...

Be aware of the times this week when you radiate the light of Christ in your family and community.

PRAYER

Lord, give me the grace and blessings I need to follow in your footsteps as your disciple; to share your mission, love and joy with the world. Amen.



THE RADICAL PATH OF JESUS.

Jer 38:4-6,8-10

Heb 12:1-4

Lk 12:49-53

At a first reading of today's Gospel, you would be understandably conflicted and somewhat confused. "I have come to bring fire to the earth." "Do you suppose I am here to bring peace to the earth? No ... but rather division." These are not the words and themes we are used to hearing from Jesus. We tend to remember and focus on Jesus sharing himself and being depicted as the; Prince of Peace, the man who tells us to love others as yourself and forgive others if they offend you.

Jesus was a radical figure who was preaching God's word as opposed to the word and ways of the world that existed. What could he have meant about bringing fire to the earth? Fire in ancient times was a symbol of God's presence among us. Think of Moses and the burning bush that created sacred ground and then the flames that descended on the Apostles at Pentecost. The fire Jesus was bringing was the fire of God's presence, a presence that transformed the lives of the people who embraced and experienced it.

And because Jesus' radical way of life was at odds with the materialistic and self-centred culture of society, anyone who followed Him and embraced His way of living, was going to experience division whether from family, friends or the authorities. Following Jesus in His mission meant that you were at odds with the individualism and materialism of secular society and that creates division. Jesus is saying there is division between his way and the world's way, and we must choose.

But choosing comes with consequences. For Jesus the consequence is preordained. He tells us in the Gospel there is still a baptism he is to receive and for him it is the cross at Calvary. And for the disciples of Jesus? In Matthew's Gospel he told them that, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

What challenges have I faced in life because of my faith?

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I AM THE WAY

Is 66:18-21

Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

Lk 13:22-30

Jesus continues on his way to Jerusalem in today's Gospel, teaching and challenging those who seek him out. Today he is asked about how many will be saved. Many of us have probably thought about this question but probably in the context of self; will I be saved? The question could almost have been, is heaven real? Jesus as he often does, turns the question around and the challenge comes back to the person asking the question and all those listening. "Enter by the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed."

Jesus says in John 14, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." There is the narrow door for you! It's Jesus!

The imagery of the narrow door is interesting as opposed to a wide open gate. The narrow door requires focus and effort to pass through rather than just ambling through the wide gate. And as Jesus is the entrance door, our focus and concentration needs to be on him to be able to pass through. The scriptures are full of the many ways we can focus on Jesus and live the life he shares.

The two commandments Jesus highlighted for us in Mark's Gospel: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'" I think these two commandments help us to understand and live out the closing lines of our reading today. "There are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last." To be last means putting God and our neighbour ahead of us, in our thoughts and in our actions.

And isn't that at the heart of our Vincentian vocation and the service we carry out in our local communities, putting others before ourselves?

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

What does being a Vincentian mean to me?

THIS WEEK...

*"Let us allow God to act;
He brings things to completion
when we least expect it."
St Vincent de Paul*

PRAYER

*Father in Heaven,
May we do with loving hearts what
you ask of us
and come to share the life you
promise. Amen*



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THIS WEEK...

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. C.S. Lewis

PRAYER

Lord, be with us as we meet our brothers and sisters in need. Let us be your face, hands and words to those who need your presence and welcome embrace. Amen.



BEING REAL

Sirach 3:17-20,28-29

Heb 12:18-19,22-24

Lk 14:1,7-14

Thankfully, every wedding reception I have attended has had a seating plan which placed me in a specific place so I didn't have to make a choice where I sat. Contrast that to the dilemma posed by Jesus to the Pharisees when he is sharing a Sabbath dinner. Having noticed that they vie for positions of honour closest to the head of the table, Jesus teaches us the value and importance of humility. The positions closest to the head of the table indicated influence, power and position in Jewish, and Roman society. And humility was not a virtue attributed to the Pharisees.

It is humility that is the central theme running through both our First Reading and the Gospel today. The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton once said, "pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real." To be humble and real is to be aware of, and appreciate the God given gifts of both yourself and the other people you connect with. And the advice from the Book of Sirach is, "be gentle in carrying out your business and you will be better loved than a lavish giver."

Humility is also one of the essential virtues of St Vincent de Paul and of the Society. In the Rule 2.5.1, five of Vincent's virtues are identified as being essential for members to promote love and show respect for the poor. "Humility, accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charisms, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others, and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without his grace." Possibly this is what Merton means by being real. Being reflective and self-aware and honest about who we really are before God.

Luke ends this gospel passage with an invitation that is radically different to both the dinner Jesus was attending and the wedding feast theme of his parable. His direction is to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to our party with no expectation of having the invitation returned.

(Reflection by Greg Ryan)

How does our conference show that we welcome all those who comes to us for help?

