



**MEDITATION ON RECOLLECTION DAY:
THE INSPIRATION AND SPIRITUALITY OF
VINCENT DE PAUL**

Opening hymn:

I WAS HUNGRY

(M. Wonen, overall, nergens thuis)

I was hungry, you gave me bread,
thirsty my lips, and almost dead,
I was a stranger; you felt the same
gave me a home and a brand-new name.
Brother, you've done well.

I was ill and I had no clothes,
you came and joined me, my side you chose,
I was imprisoned and you came to me,
you watched me closely and I was free.
Brother, you've done well.

Did I see you, was I to blame?
thirsty and hungry, without a name
sick and in prison, a refugee too
did I give food and encounter you?
brother, you've done well!

What you've done, you have done for me
for all my brothers whom you did see
be good to them then you are good to me
give heart and soul to them, make them free
brother, you've done well!

(Based on Mathew 25, 35-46)

Reading from the book : Vincent Achterna (Following Vincent) by Bro. Renée Stockman

VINCENT DE PAUL'S LOVE OF THE POOR.

Very central to Vincent's life is the love for the poor that he develops and that drives him ever further, beyond reason. "Davantage – French for more and more", is his response when talking about love.

The care that Vincent develops for the spiritually and materially poor is completely rooted in his relationship with God. He has come to know the poor, and in the poor he has been able to meet God himself. The poor becomes the finding place for Christ himself. In this too, Vincent went through a great process of growth. The abstract Christ that he got to know when he was accompanied by de Bérulle gradually made place for a more concrete Christ, until he could say with full conviction: I see, I love and I serve Christ in the poor. And that is perhaps the most innovative and radical thing that Vincent brought in his time, truly innovative for the Church but also for society, which has far-reaching consequences for the concrete care of the poor. Caritas was stripped of the detachment, the patronising, the performance of good works to earn heaven. Caritas becomes a value in itself, the most important virtue, the translation of God's love into life itself.

A moment of silence

Second reading from "Following Vincent": A deep trust in God.

It is impossible to understand Vincent's activities and charity without placing them in the light of a deep trust in God, which Vincent associated with Providence.

Vincent seeks to perceive the hand of God in everything. After his life of wandering and turmoil, he discovered that God has a purpose in everything. God had brought him to the place and the situation where he was now and had prepared him, as it were, to do this work: to preach popular missions, to help the poor, to encourage and bring people together to help others, to become an advocate for all who were in need. This, for Vincent, is Providence: the conviction that God

is a loving Father to all, who leads all things for good, from which grows a deep trust in God and which also produces in man a equanimity, a detachment from everything that binds him.

A moment of silence

Sharing

We take our time to read one or more of the texts which are to be found in the booklet 'Following Vincent in words of the psalms'. Each one of us reads aloud one or more of the texts which are dear to her or him and share why these words are meaningful to her or his way of thinking, living and praying.

Hymn :

The Good Samaritan

(Melody : Mens voor de mens te zijn)

Refrain : Walking along the road, sighted or nearly blind
Moved by one's fellowman, who is left behind

Walking to Jericho: a priest of God.
Man lying down on the ground remains in his fate.
Refrain

Then from Jerusalem comes a Levite
who looks at everything and sees no one.
Refrain

He was Samaritan, stranger to all,
cared about pains of the suffering man.
Refrain

Took care of injuries with oil and wine,

Provided food and bed. He would be there.

Refrain

Who is the neighbour then? Who was with him?

Be like that stranger and do as he did!

Refrain

Closing prayer:

Merciful Father,

We thank you for the immense grace
of the life of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In the poor he met Christ himself.

He let others share in that grace-filled encounter.

Grant that also we may be moved
by the spirit of charity you gave Vincent.

We implore you, have mercy on us
and fill our hearts and minds
with love for our brothers and sisters
who are marginalized and rejected by society.
May our concern for them be gentle,
attentive and compassionate.

Make us rediscover the audacity of Vincent,
his diligence and sweetness
and an ever-renewed love for the poor.

Strengthen our faith and make us humble of heart,
may we become a beacon of hope for all people
in a world that is far removed from you,
but longs for your presence among us.

Let us not despair when faced with difficulties,
support us in our commitment
and help us to work on the establishment of your Kingdom.
Amen.

THE LIFE AND WORK OF VINCENT DEPAUL IN HEADLINES

Vincent was born at Pouy (a village a few kilometres from Dax, in Gascony), in the south of France on April 24, 1581



He studied humanities in Dax, France.

He was ordained on September 23, 1600, in Château-l'Évêque, at the age of nineteen.



The church of Château l'Évêque

In 1612, he was named pastor of Saint Médard in Clichy, a poor rural parish just northwest of Paris.

In January of 1617, Vincent was on the Gondi estates in Folleville, and in the village he heard the confession of a dying man, who told Madame de Gondi that he would have been damned without Vincent's ministry. She urged Vincent to preach a sermon on general confessions.



Castle of the Gondis



The pulpit where Vincent held his sermon in Folleville

In 1617, Vincent founded the "Ladies of Charity" (*Dames de la Charité*) from a group of women within his parish. He organized these wealthy women of Paris to collect funds for missionary projects, found hospitals, and gather relief funds for the victims of war.

During this period Vincent experienced a twofold conversion. First, he was being converted to the poor, who were becoming the center of his life. Second, he was also being converted to his priesthood, seeing it not as a career, but as a personal relationship with Jesus.

In April, 1625, he founded the Congregation of the Mission to evangelize the poor people of the countryside. In 1633 Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac established the Company of the Daughters of Charity as a group of women dedicated to the care of the sick and the poor.



Vincent died in Paris on September 27th 1660