

Spiritual Readings for the month of December 2021

Reading #1 Serving the poor is to be our first preference

A writing by **Saint Vincent de Paul, Priest** (Epist. 2546: Correspondance, entretiens, documents, Paris 1922-1925, 7

Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined we must not judge them from external appearances nor from mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor. Although in his passion he almost lost the appearance of a man and was considered a fool by the Gentiles and a stumbling block by the Jews, he showed them that his mission was to preach to the poor: He sent me to preach the good news to the poor. We also ought to have this same spirit and imitate Christ's actions that is, we must take care of the poor, console them, help them, support their cause.

Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself. Since God surely loves the poor, he also loves those who love the poor. For when one person holds another dear, he also includes in his affection anyone who loves or serves the one he loves. That is why we hope that God will love us for the sake of the poor. So when we visit the poor and needy, we try to be understanding where they are concerned. We sympathize with them so fully that we can echo Paul's words: *I have become all things to all men*. Therefore, we must try to be stirred by our neighbors' worries and distress. We must beg God to pour into our hearts sentiments of pity and compassion and to fill them again and again with these dispositions

It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible. If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not become upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service. One of God's works is merely interrupted so that another can be carried out. So when you leave prayer to serve some poor person, remember that this very service is performed for God. Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity. Since she is a noble mistress, we must do whatever she commands. With renewed devotion, then, we must serve the poor, especially outcasts and beggars. They have been given to us as our masters and patrons.

Questions for discussion:

1. God so loves the world; why is there so much poverty in the world he created and loves?
2. What is the gift from persons experiencing poverty that you wish to receive this Christmas?
3. What is the gift you wish to give to persons experiencing poverty this Christmas?

Prayer:

Jesus, for nine months you were hidden in the womb of Mary.

You tell us you are hidden in the lives of persons who are poor.

Open our eyes and hearts to see those persons near to us, whom we visit and serve.

Come Jesus...do not delay.

Monsignor Samuel Bianco, Spiritual Advisor, Greater Toronto Central Council

Reading # 2
John 1: 43-49

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him “follow me”.

“Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”.

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see”, said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit”.

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you”.

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel”.

Reflections:

1. How do I react when Jesus calls me? Do I follow as Philip did? Do I look to bring others to Him also?
2. Why do you think Nathanael was converted by Jesus saying he had seen him under the fig tree? Was this Jesus’ way of letting him know he had seen into his heart?
3. If Jesus looked into my heart, what would he see? Would I be converted by allowing Him in?

Vincentian Denise Irvine-Robertson, St. Andrew Conference, Toronto

Dear Vincentian Sisters and Brothers,

This time of the year instead of focusing on Gifts for Christmas let's focus on the GIFT OF CHRISTMAS. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the greatest gift to us. Advent is a beautiful time to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ, let's make place in our hearts, clean our hearts to prepare for the coming of Jesus. We can do that by making small sacrifices, spending time in prayer, attending mass, reading the Bible, going for confession (best way to clean our heart). Below is an Advent novena which can help us meditate and prepare for the Lord's birth.

Starting on St. Andrew's Feast day, November 30, the following beautiful prayer is traditionally recited fifteen times a day until Christmas. This is a very meditative prayer that helps us increase our awareness of the real meaning of Christmas and helps us prepare ourselves spiritually for His coming.

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment,
In which the Son of God was born,
Of the most pure Virgin Mary,
at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold.
In that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, O my God,
to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Saviour Jesus Christ,
and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.

Submitted by Vincentian Karl Chaves, St. John of the Cross Conference, Peel