

Spiritual Readings for the month of May 2022

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

Mission Instructions (Luke 10:57-58, NRSV)

(10:57) As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” (58) And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

We find echoes of this narrative in counsel which St. Vincent de Paul gives to fellow charitable workers (*St. Vincent de Paul to Ann Margaret Guerin, Superioress of the Second Monastery of the Visitation, Paris, 20 July 1659*): “I must tell you . . . my dear Sister, that we here in Paris see a number of communities ruined, not through want of confidence in God, but because they have erected magnificent buildings, and this has not only exhausted their resources, but also compelled them to run into debt. Now, as the religious spirit should correspond with Our Lord’s, who chose to practise the most stringent poverty when on earth, even going so far as not to have a stone whereon to lay His head, the farther persons living in religion are removed from that poverty, the greater difficulty will they have in maintaining themselves, because splendid edifice, so little in harmony with their profession, are not pleasing to God.”¹

Reflection:

While the “fit” between St. Vincent’s comments and our work as contemporary laypeople is not precise, he puts his finger on the pulse of a deeper question: What might be the relationship(s) between what we have and what we can give? There is not necessarily a “right” answer here, but the question can get us thinking.

Prayer:

Lord, may we enjoy gratefully the possessions with which you have blessed us, while remembering also not to hoard possessions but to give a little time and a little wealth in the spirit of generosity with which you have gifted us.

Submitted by Vincentian Alex Damm, St. Jerome’s, Peel North

¹ Letter 2915, in *Letters of St. Vincent de Paul*, Translated and edited by Joseph Leonard, with an Introduction by Henri Bremond (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937), p. 475.

Seeing a Brother or Sister in need

Reflection

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 John 3:17)

Grandma Rosa left a deep spiritual imprint on the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio, teaching him to pray and educating him in the faith. Later, early in his priesthood, he encouraged contact with persons who are poor and advocated a realistic way of living poverty. Now as Vicar of Christ, Pope Francis points in his “The Joy of the Gospel”, an Apostolic Exhortation, to each individual Christian and every community being called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of those who are experiencing poverty and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands, he recognizes, that we be docile and attentive to the cry of those who are experiencing poverty and to come to their aid.

Reflection Questions

What and how early life events or influences – your parents, spouses, other relatives, mentors, friends, strangers, and/or others, shaped the most how you hear the cry of those who are experiencing poverty?

For those long-serving Vincentians, what keeps you faithful to the SSVP’s mission of bringing the Gospel message by serving Christ through persons who are poor with love, respect, justice and joy? In what concrete, practical ways could you help reinvigorate SSVP’s sense of purpose and build its circle of support, and share the Vincentian spirituality with others?

For those new Vincentians (less than 3 years), what elements in the SSVP’s mission attracts you the most? What specific steps would you take to deepen your resolve to hold close those people you signed up to serve?

Submitted by Vincentian Jose Torres, St. John of the Cross, Peel