

Remarks on the 50 Anniversary of
Monsignor Sam Bianco's Ordination
May 15, 2022

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. I'm Gary Valcour and as chair the Board of the Toronto Central Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul I have the honour of offering a few words for our man of the hour.

If God did not exist, said Voltaire, it would be necessary to invent Him.

While I don't think it's quite what the famous French philosopher had in mind, we have all experienced the happy circumstance which we sometimes call fate, or luck or God's will, when the stars align and the exact person or thing we need appears in our lives. For Toronto Central Council, I believe Father Sam was that person: a man who, had he not existed, we would have had to attempt to invent.

Father Sam has been our formal Spiritual Advisor for many years and an unofficial booster going back to his days as rector of St. Michael's Cathedral. He never took the role lightly; quite the opposite, regularly going out to meet with neighbours in need personally. Father Sam has always been a "hands on" kind of person. This was his approach, apparently from his days in the

seminary when he took “the inner-city plunge” as it was called and spent a week on the streets with no money and only the clothes on his back to experience in full the lives of those he was dedicated to serving.

Father Sam is beloved by our residents with whom he interacts freely and with deep compassion. From an early age, it seems, Father Sam felt a bond with those who had to deal with physical or mental challenges beginning with teaching First Communion and Confirmation classes to children with disabilities who weren't in the school system 40 years ago). Even now, he has a special feeling for those less fortunate, something which I think many folks who were raised by parents who lived through the Great Depression and World War II share. Few of us, however, have put the lessons to such great use as Father Sam.

Lest we rush too quickly to canonization (no Santo Subito for Father Sam), like everyone he has his weaknesses; I understand he occasionally roots for the Maple Leafs and I sometimes wonder about his political leanings. But nobody's perfect.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has 5 Guiding principles, Father Sam, I believe, has 3: preaching, prayer and poor persons. Well, maybe 4, as I would add “kindness”.

Plato wrote, “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle.”

St. Peter exhorted Christ’s followers to “be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” (1 Peter 3:8) and Mark Twain wrote that “kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see”.

Being a wise and well-read man, Father Sam has taken all those ideas to heart and blessed it seems with good health, his tireless efforts in all three of his pillars have given him not only a full and remarkable vocation but they have continued in retirement, and they continue today. Like St. Vincent de Paul himself, he is the embodiment of our faith in action.

Monsignor Sam, on behalf of all Vincentians and all our neighbours in need, thank you for your many years of service and may God Bless you today, on this special day, and always.