

Easter Message

Dear Brother and Sister Vincentians

To live the Gospel Message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

We have prepared ourselves throughout the period of lent for this wonderful Easter season. Lent itself has been a time to feel challenged to renewal and change. I am reminded of the challenge each of us faced when we made the decision to become “People of the Water and the Towel”. For us, as Vincentians, implicit in that challenge is the real task of learning to “Serve as Jesus Served”.

The Gospel of Matthew reads:

Jesus then called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. Such is the case with the son of man who had come, not to be served by others, but to serve, to give his own life as ransom for many. Matt:20:25 -28

Holy Thursday’s Gospel of the washing of the apostle’s feet by Jesus, even Judas’ feet provides a profound image that we will spend our lives trying to emulate. This Gospel passage is so relevant for Vincentians. It is the underpinning of what our vocation is all about.

As Vincentians we ought to feel challenged by these words! The Lenten period provides a chance and source of enlightenment to assist each one of us to go about our daily routine of serving God’s poor with compassion. There were several questions that nagged at me during this period upon which serious reflection and prayer was required.

These questions arise many times throughout the year, not just during Lent and the Easter Season, but they seem particularly salient at this special time of Christian renewal. Some questions include:

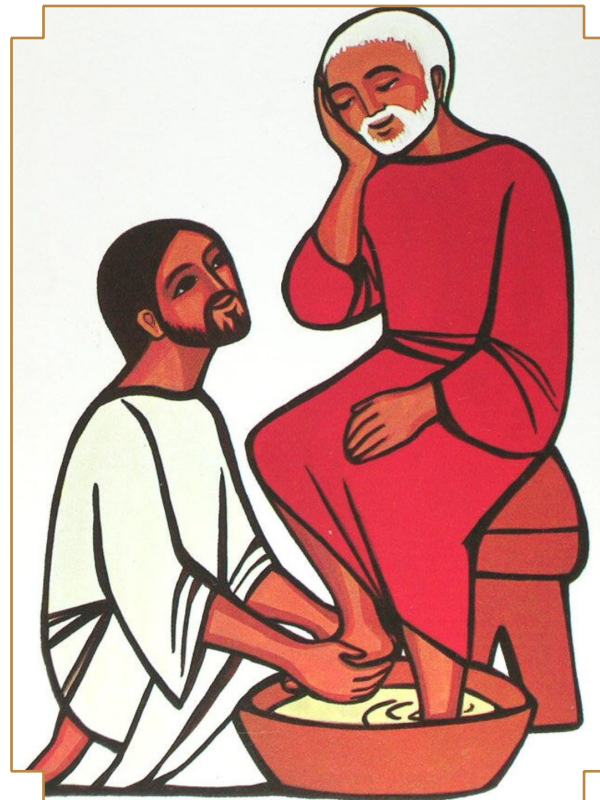
Have you tried to “serve as Jesus served” and met with failure or a less desired effect?

Do you think the kind of Vincentian work you do has little spiritual value and has more to do with a social welfare aspect?

What about a sense of contribution, do you think you have no contributions to make because others are more gifted than yourself?

Humility, would you rather be served than to serve others? If you do serve others, is it without grumbling, judgment and huffiness when you are asked to come out of your comfort zone?

As Vincentians, do you avoid positions of responsibility? When you do take a leadership role, are others able to follow your expectations, or do they become disheartened feeling like failures and eventually leave you to do all the work?



Think of the way you feel physically, do you feel “burned out” by feeling you have served too much?

Finally, what about the feeling that no one appreciates all the work you do and won't lift a finger to help?

The Gospel teachings provide help with understanding and strength. Remember you have been created to know, love and serve God, and to work your way back to the Father. That is our catechism, that is our faith. The Gospel message of the Easter Season assists us in our understanding and discernment of the true meaning of service and servanthood as an integral part of our Vincentian vocation.

No greater example of service and servant has ever lived on the earth other than Jesus himself. He came to show us the way.

Servanthood has many benefits for us as Vincentians as well as members of the body of Christ. The Lord tells his followers: "When you serve others, you are in fact serving him". As Vincentian values state, "we see Christ in all who suffer". We don't just try; we are called to "see" Christ. Seeing Christ in all who suffer assists the Vincentian with Gospel based decision-making when serving the poor. The Gospel goes on to point out that: "in serving the brothers you can see, you touch the invisible Lord" Matt 25:31 - 46.

The lowly servant in John's Gospel we see Peter's response to Jesus actions:

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "you will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you".

In those days, washing of feet was considered a very lowly thing to do. Not even servants were required to wash their master's feet. Thus, washing of the feet was the most humbling thing Christ could do. To let Christ wash their feet was also a very difficult thing to do. This humble act has implications for us as Vincentians, when we consider that often time, one of the hardest decisions a person can make is to call for help in our need. We are more accustomed to doing for, rather than having anyone do for us.

The Gospel of John continues:

After he had washed their feet, put on his robe, and returned to the table, Jesus said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord-and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you." JN 13,34

What an example indeed! The question we have to keep in mind is how will we ever get there - thus the Easter Season as a time of new beginnings.

The Easter message is one of hope, Christian hope. The hope that the cross signifies is that hope of salvation and eternal life. Christ is truly risen and among us. As Vincentians we take up the challenge to "see that Christ in all who suffer" and as we "come together as a family" we assist each other to learn what it means to "Live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy." It is the joy this Easter season that sustains and moves us.

May each and everyone one of you enjoy in abundance the fruits of renewal in this the Easter Season!

"...all one in truth and charity!"
Penny Craig, President