

# Introduction

This Spiritual Reflection guide is a resource for teachers to share with students of Mini Vinnies groups or within a Religious Education class.

Each week of the liturgical year provides notes for teachers and handouts for students relating the week's scripture readings to the Mini Vinnies or Vincentian experience.

Each week can be used independently of each other.

We hope you find this Spiritual Reflection guide a useful resource.



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# Our Patron, Founders and Inspiration

## The Patron Saint of the Society - Vincent de Paul

The Patron Saint of the Society - Vincent de Paul

Date of birth - 24 April 1581

Place of birth - Pouy, France

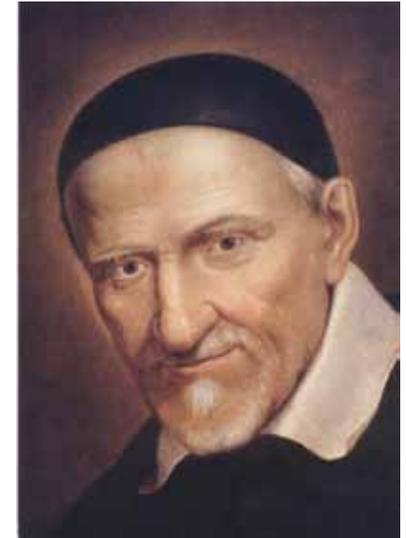
Parentage - Peasants, worked on a farm

Death - 27 September 1660

Occupation - Priest and servant of the poor

Canonisation - 1737

Feast day - 27 September



Vincent was born poor and initially longed for a life of wealth.

he was also intelligent and became a priest to pave the way from need to nobility. On the journey, he underwent a difficult spiritual crisis that resulted in a desire to help the poor.

Exalted positions such as chaplain to the Queen's court and tutor to the wealthy de Gondi family were not fulfilling to him. The profit of an ecclesiastical career was abandoned for a parish and for work with the marginalised and forgotten.

Vincent instituted an order of priests (the Congregation of the Mission or Vincentians) whose mission it was to share Jesus' good news to the villages through preaching and service. With Louise de Marillac, he co-founded the Daughters of Charity.

Vincent pledged his life to the sick and insane, orphans and old people, beggars and the starving, prisoners and galley slaves. There was no form of poverty - physical, emotional or spiritual - which he did not try to alleviate.

Most of all, though, he was committed to the poor sinful men and women who did not know what great love God had for them.

# Our Patron, Founders and Inspiration

## The man behind the Society - Antoine Frederic Ozanam

Date of birth - 23 April 1813

Place of birth - Milan (French territory at this time)

Death - 8 September 1853

Parentage - Jean Antoine Ozanam, doctor and Marie Nantas, heiress to silk business

Canonisation as a saint - Beatified in 1997

Occupation - Lawyer and Professor of Letters, husband and father



In Paris on 23 April 1833, a group of six university students met with a middle-aged journalist, Emmanuel Bailly, in his office, to form a group to be called the Conference of Charity.

The leader of the group of students was Frederic Ozanam, who was driven by a deep desire to find a way to help build the faith of his peers. Their purpose was simple: as a small group of friends, they would become servants of the poor in Paris just as Jesus Christ had been servant to the people of his time.

Frederic must have mentioned at that first meeting that only recently, while speaking in defence of the Church in some fiery debates at the university, he was challenged by a young socialist with the demanding words, "What are you doing for the poor now? Show us your works!"

Frederic realised that talk alone would never give full witness to the truth. He acted on this immediately - that same night he and some friends pooled what money they had and bought firewood for a poor family.

he continued leading the group with the help of Sr Rosalie Rendu, who assisted them to meet the poor in Paris.

Their efforts grew and developed. Others were moved by their example to commit themselves to serving the poor. The Society grew with a firm practical commitment to providing charity with justice to any person in need.

They chose to call their group the Society of St Vincent de Paul, based upon the exemplary charitable life led by St Vincent de Paul.

Frederic's life was very active, but not solely based in the Society he founded. In 1839 he completed his thesis on Dante, which led to his appointment as lecturer of foreign literature as well as law at the University of Lyon. He considered joining the Dominican order, but instead chose to marry Amelie Soulacroix in June 1841.

Frederic's health had always been poor. Under the strain of considerable literary work (including many calls for social justice), he continued lecturing and service to the poor through the Society, his health finally gave out. He died in 1853, aged 40.



# Our Patron, Founders and Inspiration

## The woman with experience - Sr Rosalie Rendu

Date of birth - 9 September 1787

Place of birth - Comfort, France

Parentage - Successful business

Occupation - Daughter of Charity

Death - 7 February 1856

Canonisation as a saint - Beatified in 2003

As a novice, Sr Rosalie was a sensitive and nervous person. She would have initially seemed an unlikely woman to spend 50 years of her life helping Paris's most impoverished.

When, in 1803, she arrived in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Paris, she was horrified by the poverty caused as a result of the civil revolution. She and her sisters distributed relief in the form of clothing, food and linen, and ran a school for children. She also used her energy to pressure the authorities and to involve others in her work.

Through Rosalie's assistance, Frederic and his companions made their first contact with the poor. Because Rosalie's good work had made her a recognised household name, the new group gained an instant respect which they would not have had otherwise.

Rosalie was a very important guide for Frederic and his friends and was a living example of how we should put our faith into action

"Love is the first gift we give the poor"



# Our Patron, Founders and Inspiration

## The woman behind the Saint - Louise de Marillac

Date of birth - 12 August 1591

Place of birth - Auvergne, France

Parentage - nobility, but illegitimate

Occupation - Wife and mother, founder of the Daughters of Charity

Canonisation as a saint - 1934

Death - 15 March, 1660



Louise was a wealthy widow who became a close friend and confidante of Vincent. She founded with him the Daughters of Charity.

During Louise's marriage, and especially after the death of her husband, Louise found herself with spare time which she dedicated to helping abandoned children on the streets.

She graduated to visiting the sick men of the chain gangs in their prison hospice (a truly horrible place) and started a house nearby where a number of women cooked food for those who visited the prisoners daily to take with them.

Throughout the country, centres staffed by wives of people in the village were set up to serve the poor. Louise pushed for every village to have its own clinic, school, nurse and teacher.

The women who came to do these jobs made up the Daughters of Charity. It was a revolutionary order of sisters who left their convents to work on the streets and in the homes of the poor. At the time, this was a truly scandalous thing to do.

Louise worked with untiring devotion fostering in her sisters respect for the individual, friendliness, devotion, no condescension, but just unlimited patience and compassion.

# 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## John 1:29-34

John saw Jesus coming toward him and said:

*“here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin from the world! he is the one I told you about when I said; ‘Someone else will come. He is greater than I am, because he was alive before I was born.’ I didn’t know who he was. But I came to baptise you with water so that everyone in Israel would see him. I was there and saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove from heaven. And the Spirit stayed on him. Before this I didn’t know who he was. But the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that he is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.’ I saw this happen, and I tell you that he is the Son of God.”*

## Something to think about...

How did Frederic Ozanam and St Vincent de Paul get people to follow their cause?

How can we see the Spirit in everyone we meet? Can we see them as special and worthy of our help as we would see the Son of God?

## Activity

- Have you seen someone baptised? Have a chat about what happens at a baptism and why people get baptised.
- What are some of the things in life that we might need forgiveness for? Take some time to yourself to think of things you would like to ask forgiveness for. Write these down on a piece of paper and place them in a sacred box that you have made as a group. Write a prayer asking for God’s forgiveness.

## Teachers Notes

In John’s passage we see the connection between Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit (the Trinity). John the Baptist was the first person to initiate followers of Christ. The initiation of baptism is the all important sacrament that opens our eyes to the kingdom of God and the message of Jesus Christ. It is in this situation that we find meaning in the traditions we believe to be integral to our faith and empowers us as disciples to do God’s work on Earth. John baptised people with water but he said God would be coming soon and would baptise them with the Holy Spirit.



# 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 4:12-23

*hearing that John had been arrested Jesus withdrew to Galilee and went to live at a place by the sea called Capernaum. Jesus started preaching, "Turn back to God! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here."*

*As he was walking by the Lake of Galilee Jesus saw two brothers, Simon, also known as Peter and his brother Andrew; fishing in the lake using large nets, because they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish." Right then the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.*

*Jesus walked on until he saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat with their father, mending their nets. Jesus asked them to come with him too. Right away they left their boat and their father and went with Jesus. Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in the Jewish meeting places and preaching the good news about God's kingdom. He also healed every kind of disease and sickness.*

## Something to think about...

If Jesus asked us to stop what we were doing now and follow him; would we?

By encouraging Simon and Peter to 'fish for people' instead of fish, Jesus was encouraging them to look beyond material possessions and see that God was calling them to follow him and spread the Good News.

Are there any people you admire and want to follow?

How can we show that we are followers of Jesus?

## Activity

- Research someone in a position of leadership who inspires you and find out 5 things about that person. Who are they? What did they do? Why were they significant in history? Also take time to think of some leaders in the world and how they can be your inspiration. An example could be Nelson Mandela.
- Write down 5 things you know about the St Vincent de Paul Society.
- Vincent and Frederic were leaders of their times, brainstorm ideas about what made St Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam decide to help people and follow in Jesus' example of loving all? Why did Frederic start the Society?

## Teachers Notes

People who follow a cause or a system of beliefs must have faith in the person taking them on the journey, just like the fishermen in this passage had faith in Jesus. Jesus was calling the men in person to follow him and live big lives, to fulfil their purpose in life and spread the Good News.

Use this passage to think of the ways you are leading your group; what you are doing in the name of Christ.

# 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 5:1-12

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of the mountain and sat down. Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he began to speak. This is what he taught them:*

*"Blessed are those people who depend only on him. The kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

*Blessed are those people who mourn, they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are those people who are gentle, the Earth will be theirs.*

*Blessed are those people who hunger and thirst for honesty, they shall have their fill.*

*Blessed are those who are merciful, they shall be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are those who make peace, they will be called his children.*

*Blessed are those people who are treated badly for being honest. The kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

*God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of lies about you because of me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven."*

## Something to think about...

What does the word blessed mean?

What other words could replace blessed? Some examples are: happy, fortunate and favoured by God.

This passage describes a long list of things of which we shall be rewarded in heaven for. Are there things mentioned that we do already without even recognising them?

## Activity

- Find some Bible passages that show how Jesus stood up for those who needed a helping hand and the outcasts of his time. Share these with the group and discuss ways in which Jesus helped these people and how you can also lend a helping hand.
- Write a prayer as a group asking God to guide you to be the best person you can be and encourage this in others. Say thanks for making you who you are and for the things you have.

## Teachers Notes

This passage teaches us not to get caught up in the challenges and troubles we face here on Earth; that if we are passionate dedicated and doing the works of God we can expect challenges; that if we continue to be honest, caring and merciful people, we will enjoy God's kingdom. Find peace in this knowledge!

Think about the ways we are already rewarded in our lives: some things to be thankful for are living freely, our family, our friends and our health. This reading is the start of Jesus' sermon on the mountain. Jesus begins his sermon with a series of blessings. Sometimes life can be hard and we experience difficulty, but this scripture reminds us that as believers we are blessed at every season, the good and challenging days.

With our faith we are able to get through these times, strengthened by the hope that Jesus gives us. As Mini Vinnies members and young Christians we work with people in need. As we serve people we are living out this scripture by being a blessing to others. When we donate toys or food to charity we are not able to hear the recipient say 'thank you'. You don't need to worry if people might not recognise or know of the good deeds you have done for them, because God sees your generous act and will reward you.



# 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 5:13-16

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are like salt for everyone on Earth. But if salt no longer tastes like salt, how can it be used to season foods to make them taste better? All it is good for is to be thrown out and walked on.'*

*'You are like light to the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lamp stand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.'*

## Something to think about...

Salt refers to Christians maintaining what is good, pure, honest and the commandments set by God.

Table salt can lose its flavour by having other minerals added to it. This symbolises for us that we must be good people and not let the bad elements of the world change our character or goodness.

If we live outside the image of God then what are we telling people about God? It will make people think we are lying about our faith because we contradict what we are saying through our actions.

You are like light to the world - Jesus was telling us that we are to brighten and show the way to others.

Think about all the things we need light for. What ways do we get light? Some examples are light bulbs and candles. How can we be warm and help show others the way?

## Activity

- Materials needed: 1 candle for each child, permanent markers or paint
- Each student receives a candle and can decorate it with pictures of stain glass windows or a cross etc. Then turn off the lights in the class room and light up one candle at a time. Show how one light can make a small difference then as you add the candles together the room lights up brighter and brighter.
- Research and give some examples on the use of salt in history and then an example of how we use it today.

## Teachers Notes

Throughout history salt has been a very valuable resource, used to preserve meat. The second important purpose of salt is to season food for flavour. Salt was also a form of currency and was used to heal wounds.

Because of the value and versatility of salt, Jesus compared his followers to salt so they would understand their value on Earth. As believers we have been chosen by God as his representatives (salt) on Earth. To be an example of God on Earth and show his goodness so that others would believe and turn to him.

# 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 5:23-24

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you are about to place a gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry at you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Go and make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God.'*

God does not want us to fight, hold anger or be unforgiving. He wants us to live in peace with one another and be the image of Christ on Earth. If we do this we are able to show that we can resolve our differences in a loving way.

We should not try and bring an offering to God when our actions and behaviours do not demonstrate this peaceful mind-set. He tells us in this passage that we can't talk to him if we haven't resolved issues with our neighbours. The best gift we can give to God and to ourselves is to not carry anger towards others. God wants us to live with a genuine attitude. God would much rather us come to him with love in our hearts and at peace with our friends and family than to receive a gift from us at his altar while we are unhappy or in conflict with others.

## Activity

Gather up a collection of different sized and shaped stones and pebbles and place them in a basket.

Each student takes one or two stones from the basket.

These stones symbolise our gifts we would like to give to God at his altar. Talk about what gifts these rocks could represent. For example; love, being kind to others, honesty, being fair etc.

Have a think about anyone you have had a disagreement or fight with lately. You may offer to God that you will resolve the situation with the person or not get angry next time something happens. Think about who you could talk to or include in your games in the playground, at home, or in the classroom. Encourage students to complete this task with thoughtful prayer.

At the next meeting or after the lunch break have students return as a group and offer their gift to God (their stones) at the altar of your sacred space that you may have decorated with pictures of Jesus Christ and Frederic Ozanam.

Talk about the feelings you got from including someone, talking with them and getting to know them. Discuss how much better it feels to offer this stone with a heart full of love and pride than before you reconciled/befriended a stranger.

## Teachers Notes

Students may need to realise some strong feelings within themselves in a safe environment.

This reading and its message is useful to encourage students to talk through their problems with others and not carry burdens or grudges towards others.

This story is also encouraging us to be good people, doing right by others and showing our faith in the way we live.

As teachers and leaders we have the opportunity to influence others.



# 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## **Matt 5:38-39 and 43-48**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*You know what you have been taught, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'*

*But I tell you, do not try to get even with a person who has done something to you...*

*You have heard people say, 'Love your neighbours and hate your enemies.'*

*But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven.*

*"he makes the sun rise on both good and bad people.*

*And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong.*

*If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that?*

*... you must always act like your Father in heaven."*

## **Something to think about...**

How would you usually treat a bully at school? How would Jesus treat them?

Is it difficult or easy to love someone who may have hurt you in the past or said unkind things?

Jesus told his disciples to not just talk to those people they know and be kind to those whom they love, but to greet everyone with the same kindness, otherwise we are not being the best people we can be. To be like our Father in heaven we start with being kind to everyone. We can all do this everyday.

## **Activity**

- The only way to try to love all people is to have empathy for others. For one hour, walk in someone else's shoes. Perhaps you could wear a blind fold for 5 minutes or go without lollies or chocolate for a day. Write down how you felt when doing these challenges.
- Discuss the issues that could be facing a bully at school. For example; home life, parental separation, being bullied themselves or they want friends but they just don't know how to approach people.
- Read a section in the novel 'Bridge to Terabithia' by Katherine Paterson about Janice Avery (Chapter 5 pp.53-62 and Chapter 7 pp.83-84). Discuss how the characters treat Janice Avery.
- How would Jesus want you to treat a bully at school?



# 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Isaiah 49:14-15

*The people of Jerusalem said, 'The Lord has forgotten about us.'*

*The Lord replied, 'Can a mother forget a child that nurses at her breast or fail to love the one who came from her own body? Even if a mother could forget, I will never forget you.'*

## Psalm 139: 12-18

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the Earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them - they are more than the sand; I come to the end - I am still with you.*

## Something to think about ...

God is our father and will always protect us

What are some of the things that you worry about?

How do your parents look after you to make sure you don't have to worry about things?

## Activity

- As a group read together the well known story "Footprints", by Margaret Fishback Powers (see below).
- Find a template of footprints or students may trace their own feet, making two sets.
- In one set of feet, write 1-2 moments where they felt God's love and presence. Examples may be when a baby is born in the family, a bright sunny day, while praying or when a new friendship was formed.
- In the other set of feet; write about times where you may have felt you needed his help or like God wasn't with you. Eg. When I hurt myself; when I was sick; when someone was unkind to me; when I was in trouble.
- Decorate the feet and place them on a wall or in the students' workbook. Talk about how God is with us in both sets of feet and that His footprint is the same as ours.
- Touch on the point at the end of the story. When there was only one set of footprints, the person thinks that God has abandoned them, but God reminds them that during the hardest times in life that he was there, carrying them instead.





# 9th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 7:21-27

*The Lord says, 'Anyone who hears and obeys these teachings of mine is like a wise person who built a house on solid rock. Rain poured down, rivers flooded, and winds beat against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on solid rock. Anyone who hears my teachings and does not obey them is like a foolish person who built a house on sand. The rain poured down, the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house. Finally, it fell with a crash.'*

## Something to think about...

The house on rock is like believing in God. It has a solid foundation.

The house on sand is like not believing in God. Life is less stable and can fall apart when times are challenging.

## Activity

- Draw your impression of what each house looks like; a house built on rock and a house built on sand.
- Write words on the houses to describe how they each represent ways you can approach your life through Jesus' teachings.
- Discuss foundations of buildings around us. Can we see them? Do they look strong? How do we know a building is safe?
- Brainstorm ways we can make our lives strong in faith and what our foundations and building blocks are.

## Teachers Notes

In this scripture passage, the Lord is telling us that his teachings are solid. The person who lives by Jesus' word is building his house on strong ground. His teachings provide a strong foundation to build a meaningful life on in order to reach the kingdom of heaven. The Lord is saying to his people that it is not enough to come to him saying you have spread the Good News and have strong faith, you must live this faith.

Vinnies is all about putting your faith into action. Everything we do is about loving others and helping them so that we may all build our houses on strong rock. God's words are quite powerful and purposeful.

he speaks of a wise person and one that is a fool. he is very clear about how he views those who preach but do not act. he does not say this to frighten us, but to give us the guidance we need and to acknowledge us for building a strong faith as young children that will make our futures meaningful.

These are empowering words for young people and at times in their lives they may feel their foundations shake, but they only need to turn to God's teachings to remind them that their future is built on solid rock. Being a Christian involves building a life on a solid base. Hopefully they will continue to build their faith throughout their lives.

# 1st Sunday of Lent

## Matthew 4:1-11

*Then Jesus was led away by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry. The devil came and said to Jesus, "If you are the son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.."*

*Jesus replied, "Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word this comes from the mouth of God."*

*The devil then took Jesus to the Holy City and set him on the parapet of the temple. "If you are the son of God," he said, "throw yourself down."*

*Jesus replied, "he has given his angels orders about you, and they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone. Do not put the Lord your God to the test."*

*Next, the devil came and took Jesus to a very high mountain; the devil showed him the entire kingdom and their splendour. He said to Jesus, "I will give you all these things, if you fall at my feet and do me homage."*

*Then Jesus replied, "Away with you, Satan! For scripture says 'The Lord your God is the only one to whom you must do homage. him alone you must serve.'"*

*The devil left and suddenly angels appeared and looked after Jesus.*

## Something to think about...

Before the devil had tempted him, Jesus had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights yet he still did not give into temptation.

Temptations aren't always bad. We can be tempted by opportunities that would be good for us as much as by things that would not be good for us. It is the choices we make that define who we are and our character.

What kind of things tempt you in your life?

When do you think temptation is more likely to come?

What can you do to make sure you do not give in to this temptation?

What is lent about? Do you think it is about giving up something? Or about doing more for others?

## Activity

- Give each student an opportunity to share with the class what they have decided to give up for lent and why.
- Talk about things that might tempt you to not fulfil your intentions.
- As a class, agree to help each other to realise/complete our lent intentions, especially through certain times, places etc when it is difficult to resist.





# 2nd Sunday of Lent

## Matthew 17:1-9

*Six days later, Jesus took Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling as light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord', he said, 'It is wonderful for us to be here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' he was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. He enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead.'*

## Something to think about...

How would you react if you were one of the disciples who witnessed these events?

How does this event affect us as Mini Vinnies members and Christians today?

Why do you think Jesus said not to tell anyone about what they saw until after he had risen from the dead?

## Activity

- How do you picture Jesus? What do you think he looks like? Draw a picture of Jesus. What do you think he would be wearing today?
- Draw another picture - what do you think he would have looked like to the disciples according to the story.

## Teachers Notes

The transfiguration is the culminating point of Jesus' public life; a life that began at his baptism and ended with his ascension. During the encounter, dazzling brightness emanated from his whole body.

The fact that Moses, who represented the Law and Elijah, who represented the prophets, were present at this occasion is significant. Jesus' conversation with Elijah and Moses symbolises the key role Jesus plays in linking the laws or teachings of Christianity with the stories and history of the prophets and our faith.

Discuss what it must have felt like for the young men to be on the mountain in awe of Christ's amazing presence, filled with many questions and be told sternly by an overwhelming presence from above to listen and not speak.

Jesus' gentle nature reassured them that there is nothing to be afraid of. This is also a reminder of how he is always with us even in our times of fear and uncertainty. If we listen closely we will hear him say, "stand up, do not be afraid". The Apostles weren't expecting to see Jesus in this amazing way. This passage tells us that sometimes extraordinary things happen in our ordinary day to day lives. These moments build our faith and reaffirm our belief in Christ. These are also special moments and glimpses of understanding of God. You may experience moments like this throughout your life.



# 3rd Sunday of Lent

## John 4:5-42

*Jesus was travelling to Galilee when he became tired in his travels. he stopped at the town of Sychar for water as a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well.*

*Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?"*

*"You are a Jew," she replied, "And I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?"*

*Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask him for the water that gives life."*

*"Sir" she said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?"*

*Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."*

*The woman begged Jesus for this water but thought that Jesus was a prophet. The woman said, "I know the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."*

*Jesus told her, "I am that one...and I am speaking with you now."*

*Many Samaritans in that town put their faith in Jesus because of what they heard him say. They told the woman, "We no longer have faith in Jesus because of what you told us. We have heard him ourselves, and we are certain that he is the Saviour of the world."*

## Some things to think about...

When have you come across something that wasn't what you first thought? For example, something or someone you thought you wouldn't like but when you tried it or got to know them, you found it/ them very enjoyable.

If you were the woman at the well, what would you have said to a man saying he was Christ?

The Samaritans said that their faith in Jesus became much stronger once they had heard Jesus speak to them directly. Before that they had only heard the woman talk about him.

Are there any ways that your faith is made stronger? It could be through someone doing something nice for you, reading the Bible or going to Mass. How does Jesus speak to us?

## Activity

- How many countries are there around the world?
- How many different languages and religions?
- How many people are there in the world?
- God as the Saviour of the world accepts all and calls us to accept all people no matter what their background, race, gender etc.



# 3rd Sunday of Lent

## Teachers Notes

The woman couldn't understand that Jesus was telling her that God gives life on Earth and eternally. At the beginning of their conversation the woman didn't know who she was talking to, but as soon as she understood she went into town to tell everyone about him. They didn't believe the woman, but when they met Jesus they realised that he was the Saviour of the world and decided to be his followers. God provides for his people, sometimes through unexpected ways or people. In this case the woman was not a believer and did not expect that a Jewish man would be friendly. She certainly did not expect him to be the Son of God. This passage reminds us to have faith, trust and to accept goodness no matter where it comes from. The passage also outlines that material things come and go but eternal life is found in your relationship and belief in God.

Start a discussion with students about acceptance of others and that we are all worthy of drinking the same water and living a good life no matter who we are.

Encourage them to think of places where they might exclude people from having the same rights, such as on the playground.

Jews and Samaritans wouldn't historically have had anything to do with one another, but Jesus was teaching us how we should treat all as our neighbours.

People come from many different backgrounds; they have different appearances, genders, beliefs, religions, family structures, skills and abilities.

Think of birds: There are many different types, varieties, appearances, big, small, colourful or fluffy birds. People are the same; they are very different to one another but all are people and should be treated with respect. All are God's people.





# 5th Sunday of Lent

## **John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45**

*Martha and her sister Mary sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick. When Jesus heard this he said, "his sickness won't end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son."*

*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. But he stayed where he was for two days. Then he said to his disciples, "Now we'll go back to Judea."*

*When Jesus got to Bethany, he found Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house.*

*Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask."*

*Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again!"*

*Martha answered, "I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised."*

*Jesus then said, "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live even if they die and everyone who lives because of their faith in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

*"Yes Lord!" she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world."*

*Many people had come to comfort Mary, and when they saw her quickly leave the house, they thought she was going out to the tomb to cry, so they followed her.*

*Mary went to where Jesus was. As soon as she saw him, she kneeled at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."*

*When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset and asked, "Where have you put his body?"*

*They replied, "Lord, come and you will see." Jesus started crying and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus." Some of them said, "he gives sight to the blind. Why couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"*

*Jesus was terribly upset. So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance. He told the people to roll the stone away. But Martha said, "Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead for four days, there will be a bad smell."*

*Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?"*

*After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers, but I said this so the people here would believe that you sent me."*

*When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"*

*The man who had been dead came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth that covered his face.*

*Jesus told the people, "Untie him and let him go."*

*Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw the things that Jesus did, and they put their faith in him.*





# Passion Sunday

## Philippians 2:8-9

*Christ became obedient for us even to death, dying on the cross. Therefore God raised him on high and gave him a name above all other names.*

## Matthew 21:1-11

*When Jesus and his disciples came near to Jerusalem he went to Bethphage on the mount of Olives and sent two of his disciples on ahead. He told them, "Go into the next village, where you will at once find a donkey and her colt. Untie the two donkeys and bring them to me, if anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, 'The Lord needs them.' Right away he will let you have the donkeys."*

*So God's promise came true, just as the prophet said, 'Announce to the people of Jerusalem: Your king is coming to you! he is humble and rides on a donkey. He comes on the colt of a donkey.'*

*The disciples left and did what Jesus had told them to do. They brought the donkey and its colt and laid some clothes on their backs.*

*Then Jesus got on, many people spread clothes on the road, while others put down branches which they had cut from trees. Some people walked ahead of Jesus and others followed behind.*

*They were all shouting, "Hosanna for the Son of David! God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hooray for God in heaven above!"*

*When Jesus came to Jerusalem, everyone in the city was excited and asked, "Who can this be?"*

*The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

## Something to think about...

What do you think humility is?

The Bible says we should be humble as Jesus was. How do we do that in our day to day lives?

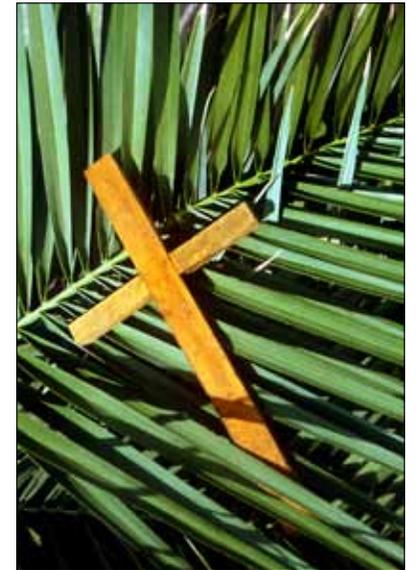
## Activity

- What are some words you use to describe God? Draw a mind map and try to think of as many ways to describe God as possible. Think of how you would have made your entrance into the world as God. Do you think you would be born a baby?

## Teachers Notes

Humility comes from the Latin word Humillilis. Humillilis means low and from the Earth.

A humble person is considered modest and does not boast about their achievements and qualifications. Jesus demonstrated humility throughout his life and ministry. Jesus died on the cross, taking the weight of the world on his shoulders so that we might have a relationship with him and have eternal life. Jesus knew exactly what would happen on this day but fulfilled this commitment and died to save us and wash us clean of our sins.





# 2nd Sunday of Easter

## John 20:19-29

*On the evening of that same Sunday they locked themselves in a room. Suddenly Jesus appeared in the middle of the group. He greeted them and showed them his hands and his side.*

*When the disciples saw the Lord, they became very happy. After Jesus had greeted them again, he said, 'I am sending you, just as the Father has sent me.' Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they will be forgiven, but if you do not forgive their sins, they will not be forgiven."*

*Although Thomas was one of the twelve Apostles, he was not with the others when Jesus appeared to them. When he returned they told him, "We have seen the Lord!"*

*But Thomas said, "First, I must see the nail scars in his hands and touch them with my finger. I must put my hand where the spear went into his side. I won't believe unless I do this."*

*A week later the Apostles were together again. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came in while the doors were still locked and stood in the middle of the group. He greeted his disciples and said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Put your hand in my side. Stop doubting and have faith."*

*Thomas replied, "You are my Lord and my God."*

*Jesus said, "Thomas, you have faith because you have seen me. The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed."*

## Some things to think about...

Imagine that you were playing with some friends and Jesus appeared and started talking to you.

Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe". Who is he referring to when he says this?

## Activity

- What other miracles did Jesus perform to show the disciples that he was the Son of God?

## Teachers Notes

The Gospel of John explains Christ's divinity. Throughout the Gospel we learn of many signs and wonders he performed.

Jesus tells the disciples that he is sending them to spread the Good News and breathes on them so that they receive the Holy Spirit.

The disciples chose to carry out his ministry and many times he did things to prove to the disciples that he was who he said he was. He walked on water and he calmed the storm. In this scripture Thomas is still in doubt as he has not seen Jesus for himself. Jesus proves himself faithful and reveals himself a second time so that Thomas might believe.

Sometimes because of injustice we see, such as people struggling and in pain, we might begin to doubt our faith. We can turn to Jesus to help us overcome our doubt.





# 4th Sunday of Easter

## John 10:1-10

*Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you for certain that only thieves and robbers climb over the fence instead of going in through the gate to the sheep pen. But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out.*

*"When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them and they follow, because they know his voice. The sheep will not follow strangers."*

*Jesus told the people this story. But they did not understand what he was talking about.*

*Then Jesus said, 'I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture. A thief comes only to rob, kill and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life and have it to its fullest.'*

## Something to think about...

What do you think this passage means for us?

If God is our shepherd and we are his sheep, what is our pasture?

## Activity

- Draw a fork in the road.
- On one side, list the things that help us follow our Shepherd. For example, being honest, being a good friend etc.
- On the other side, list the things that take us away from the life God wants us to lead. For example, not doing the chores we're supposed to, not including a classmate in a game, not sharing our toys with our brother or sister.
- An extra element could include asking the kids to also think about and/or jot down how these behaviours (on both sides of the road) make people feel. E.g – when I left Jane out of the game it would have made her feel lonely.





# 5th Sunday of Easter

## John 14:1-6

*Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't be worried. Have faith in God and have faith in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together. You know the way to where I am going."*

*Thomas said, "Lord we don't even know where you are going. How can we know the way?"*

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus answered, "Without me, no one can go to the Father."*

## John 15: 12-13, 13-17

*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends...I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commandments so that you may love one another.*

## Some things to think about...

Sometimes it's difficult to love everybody as Jesus loves us.

When Jesus talks about the greatest love - laying down our life for a friend - is he talking in a literal sense?

## Activity

- Make a paper chain of little people.
- Write on the people things we can do to love others as God loves us, and how we can put others before ourselves

## Teachers Notes

The commandment to love one another as God has loved us is arguably the most important commandment of all.

Whilst the reference to the greatest love – laying our life down for another – can be considered in a literal sense, we can also reflect on what it means to put others before ourselves in other ways. For example, putting our pocket money in the poor box at church, helping a friend when they are upset or in trouble, letting our siblings have the window seat in the car, offering who we are and what we have with others.

In the second half of the passage Jesus says that he now calls us his friends because he has told us everything that God has planned. This was a reference to the crucifixion. What Jesus was saying in these two passages is have faith, trust me because as my friends I have chosen you and have the very best intentions in my heart for you. For you I will lay down my life so that you can have a relationship with God and live for eternity in heaven. He told his disciples what he could and for the rest of the journey that had to have faith.



# 6th Sunday of Easter

## John 14:15-21

*Jesus said to his disciples, "If you love me, you will do as I command. Then I will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to you who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true. The people of this world cannot accept the Spirit, because they don't see or know him. But you know the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you. If you love me, you will do what I have said, and my Father will love you. I will also love you and show you what I am like."*

## Some things to think about...

What are the things that God would like us to do in our day to day lives and in our Mini-Vinnies group?

Are there times when we are not obedient to God, or to those around us?

## Activity

- Name some things that St Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam did that showed they loved God. Vinnies is founded on the idea that individually we can make a small difference but together we can make a big difference!
- Write a list of all the things that your Mini Vinnies group will do this week that would please God.

## Teachers Notes

Jesus said to his disciples, 'if you love me, you will do as I command'. Obedience and doing things that may be difficult is a way we can show our love to people. Sometimes we do not obey our parents when they give us boundaries or rules but we need to remember that these boundaries are not to hold us back, but are there to keep us safe.

St Vincent de Paul (our Patron Saint) and Frederic Ozanam (our founder) were obedient to the call of God in their lives. They faithfully served God and the poor throughout their lives.

There are many people in the world today and through the generations that have followed Jesus and lived a life of service. Some of the famous ones are Mother Teresa and St Mary MacKillop.

One thing we always need to remember is that we do not have to be famous to make a difference. We shouldn't underestimate the power of human kindness and the greatness within ordinary events in life.

There are millions of people around the world, old and young, rich and poor, who are doing their part to serve people as part of Vinnies and we as Mini Vinnies are following in their footsteps. You can make a huge difference to people's lives through your faith in action.











# 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 9: 9-13

*As Jesus was leaving Capernaum, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes.*

*Jesus said to him, "Come with me." Matthew got up and went with him.*

*Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. Some Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?"*

*Jesus heard them and answered, "healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others'. I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners."*

## Some things to think about...

What does mercy mean?

How can you be merciful to others?

How did Frederic Ozanam show mercy to others?

## Activity

- In your own words, write a definition of mercy. Share it with the person next to you.
- List things that you can do to show mercy to others. Share your ideas with the group.

## Teachers Notes

Mercy means showing kindness, thinking of others and putting the needs of others before your own. Jesus wanted to help people who knew that they needed help, people who were truly sorry for the things they had done.

God wants us to be merciful to others. he cares about the relationships we have with others as much as the relationship we have with him.

Frederic Ozanam was challenged by other university students to put his faith into action. He realised that he needed to do more than talk about God, he needed to show his faith by caring for those less fortunate than himself. The St Vincent de Paul Society began by visiting those in need in their own homes and this continues to this day. By visiting those in need, the Society members do more than just hand out goods, they develop relationships with people.







# 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matt 11:25-30

*If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light.*

## Some things to think about...

What is a burden?

How does God help us to carry our burdens?

What things can we do to help others carry their burdens?

## Activity

### “Shadow feet” – Brook Fraser

*Walking, tumbling on these shadow feet  
toward home, a land that I’ve never seen  
I am changing: less and less asleep  
made of different stuff than when I began  
and I have sensed it all along  
fast approaching is the day*

[CHORUS]

*When the world has fallen out from under me  
I’ll be found in you, still standing  
When the sky rolls up and mountains fall on their knees  
When time and space are through  
I’ll be found in you*

*There’s distraction buzzing in my head  
saying in the shadows it’s easier to stay  
but I’ve heard rumours of true reality  
whispers of a well-lit way*

[CHORUS]

*You make all things new*

[CHORUS]

[CHORUS 2]

*When the world has fallen out from under me  
I’ll be found in you, still standing  
Every fear and accusation under my feet  
when time and space are through  
I’ll be found in you*

- Compare the lyrics in this song to what Jesus was saying. What does the line “well lit way” mean? What advantages are there in putting our trust in Christ instead of trying to control everything in our lives?
- Think about how God helps us to carry our burdens. What burdens or challenges do other people both in Australia and in the wider world face?
- Write a prayer for people who are carrying heavy burdens. Pray that they find peace and rest in their lives.





# 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matt 13:1-9

Jesus went out beside Lake Galilee, where he sat down to teach. Such large crowds gathered around him that he had to sit in the boat, while the people stood on the shore. Then he taught them many things by using stories.

Jesus said, 'A farmer went out to scatter seed in a field. While the farmer was scattering the seed, some fell along the road and was eaten by birds. Other seeds fell on thin, rocky ground and quickly started growing because the soil was not very deep. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and dried up, because they did not have enough roots. Some other seeds fell where thorn bushes grew up and choked the plants. But a few seeds did fall on good ground where the plants produced a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as was scattered. If you have ears, pay attention!'

## Something to think about...

How good is your life?

When have you experienced 'good ground' and when has life been like the 'rocky ground' described in the passage?

## Activity

- Draw a picture of a time in your life when you felt on rocky ground.
- What were the things that helped you overcome this difficult time?

## Teachers Notes

We can't always control where we are in life and what happens. Sometimes good and bad things happen that are out of our control. God's wish for our us is that you would make the most of life and be happy even if there are challenging circumstances.

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# 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 15:21-28

*A woman said, "Lord and son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is full of demons."*

*Jesus said, "I was sent only to the people of Israel! They are like a flock of lost sheep."*

*The woman came closer, then she knelt down and begged, "Lord, please help me!"*

*Jesus replied, "It isn't right to take food away from children and feed it to dogs."*

*"Lord that's true," the woman said, "but even house dogs get the crumbs that fall from their owners table."*

*Jesus answered, "Dear woman you really do have a lot of faith, and you will be given what you want."*

*At that moment her daughter was healed.*

## Something to think about...

When are there times we look the other way, judge or avoid helping another person?

Has there been times when you treated someone badly because you felt peer pressure to fit in with the crowd?

## Activity

- Write a prayer for someone who is sick or injured. With your Mini Vinnies group commit to praying for those people for the rest of the week.
- *Prayer: Through the intercession of Blessed Frederic Ozanam we ask You to consider those for whom we now pray...*

## Teachers Notes

Jesus demonstrates in this parable that sometimes we have to knock more than once when we are asking for help. It is this persistence and faith behind the woman's actions that led Jesus to heal her daughter. The woman was not a believer but she had hope. This demonstrates that the hope and faith found in Jesus is open to everyone.

Think about people in society who are sick, for example people with cancer or AIDS. They may know someone who is sick. Encourage the children to share their experiences with the group.

Perhaps there could be something that they could do for that person to bring a little bit of joy or comfort to their lives.









# 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## John 13:34

*Alleluia, Alleluia. I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. Alleluia, Alleluia*

## Some things to think about...

Jesus gave us the commandment to love one another.

How do we love others?

How do we share ourselves, who we are and what we have?

Vinnies tells us what they would like us to do by giving us a Mission Statement:

*The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.*

*– Mission Statement of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Australia*

## Activity

- Write a short mission statement of your own outlining what you think it means to be a part of the Mini-Vinnies group.
- Have a go at the following Find-A-Word

D	E	S	T	I	N	Y	H	K	K
I	X	C	Q	S	Z	D	S	T	J
G	Z	B	W	D	X	S	H	F	G
N	A	P	E	F	C	A	A	Z	H
I	S	N	E	G	J	E	R	U	O
T	J	R	R	R	U	Q	I	R	H
Y	D	E	T	J	S	W	N	E	O
K	F	S	S	K	T	O	G	S	P
R	G	P	Y	U	V	B	N	O	E
B	H	E	U	L	S	X	T	U	P
X	J	C	I	P	B	M	U	R	E
C	A	T	H	O	L	I	C	C	H
N	K	M	O	O	N	F	S	E	J
R	E	S	O	R	M	B	I	S	L

## WORDS

poor  
respect  
person  
resources

hope  
just  
Jesus  
dignity

Catholic  
Sharing  
destiny



# 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Psalm 145

*The Lord is near to all who call on him.*

*Lord, I praise you each day*

*And always honour your name.*

*You are wonderful Lord, and you deserve all praise,*

*Because you are much greater than anyone can understand.*

## Some things to think about...

What things do you do in your Mini Vinnies group that show your faith in God?

Frederic wrote:

“The Earth has become a chilly place. It is up to us Catholics to rekindle the flame of human warmth going out. It is up to us to recommence the great work of regeneration even if it means another era of martyrs....”

How can we do nothing while others suffer? Are we going to fight for what is right in life?

## Activity

- What are some issues within your local community? There may be a group of individuals or families that need a hand.
- In your group, brainstorm some ideas about some of the issues you identified. For ideas, look through your local papers.
- In a second list come up with some ways your group could help. Pick one issue and one action item and put together an action plan for your group. This may be an idea that you try to achieve by the end of the year.

## Teachers Notes

The St Vincent de Paul Society's founder, Frederic Ozanam, strongly believed that faith without charity had no meaning. Frederic Ozanam shared a lot of his thoughts and experiences about working with people who were living in poverty. He did this through public lectures and also publications. On 15 April, 1848, Frederic launched his newspaper, “Nouvelle Ere”, which means “The New Era”, which covered issues of politics and justice for the working class people of Paris.

# 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time



## Responsorial Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

*R) Remember your mercies, O Lord,  
Show me your paths and teach me to follow;  
Guide me in your truth and instruct me.  
You keep me safe, and I always trust you.*

*R) Remember your mercies, O Lord.  
Please, Lord, remember.  
You have always been patient and kind.  
Forget each wrong I did when I was young.  
Show how truly kind you are and remember me.*

*R) Remember your mercies, O Lord.  
You are honest and merciful,  
And you teach sinners how to follow your path,  
You lead humble people to do what is right and to stay on your path.*

*R) Remember your mercies, O Lord.*

## Activity

- Create a collage in the shape of the St Vincent de Paul Society logo (or it could be in the shape of a cross), remembering the link between our Catholic faith and the mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society.
- An alternate activity is to collect photos from your Mini Vinnies group that have been taken over the year, pictures from the St Vincent de Paul Society from their 'Vision' magazine or even pictures of our founders and make them into a collage.
- For the past few weeks we have been looking at different readings from the Bible. Why do we do this?

## Teachers Notes

"Does your family enjoy looking back over treasured photo albums and re-telling the stories behind the pictures? While every detail is not recorded, the photos do capture the highlights and carry a 'sense' of your family history, identity and values.

The scriptures are a bit like our faith family's 'photo album', re-telling the stories of God's family, of which we are members. As you listen to these stories, allow God to speak to you through these stories." – The Story Source, 1993

We have also been remembering things from the history of the St Vincent de Paul Society or from our Mini Vinnies group. This is important because we need to always remember that Vinnies is a Catholic organisation and that our main job is to heighten the awareness of Jesus Christ in our nation. It is always important to make the teachings of Jesus Christ relevant to the situations we face today in our everyday lives.

# 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Paul 4:6-9

*Brothers and sisters, don't worry about anything, but pray about everything.*

*With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.*

*Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do.*

*So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you.*

## Something to think about...

Peace... “does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work.

It means to be in the middle of these things and still be calm in your heart. ”

– Fr Paul Ghanem OFM

## Activity

- Write a list of the things you hope for.
- What are you thankful for?
- What things make your heart calm or bring you peace?

## Teachers Notes

The peace that Paul says will “...control the way you think and feel” is not a human peace that we offer, it is a perfect peace.

This passage reminds us that we should not worry, that we should place our trust in God to know what we need and provide for us.

“The peace of the Lord be with you always”. This blessing we receive from a priest during mass is a peace that is more than the absence of war; it is a peace that brings with it a very real hope. It is a peace filled with the grace and fairness of God.



# 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 22: 1-14

*Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but the guests refused.*

*Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened cattle have been butchered, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'*

*But they paid no attention and went off - one to his field and another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army to destroy those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.*

## Something to think about...

What excuses have you used to get out of doing something you did not want to do?

What do you think the person felt like when you told them the excuse?

Where do you think you fit into the parable that Jesus told?

## Activity

- Create an invitation that they might have used to invite people to the wedding banquet. Use pens, pencils and craft equipment to make it beautiful.
- How would you get people to come?

## Teachers Notes

In this parable Jesus explains what the kingdom of heaven is like. The passage shows us that all are invited into the kingdom of heaven but not all will accept the invitation.

In John 3:16 Jesus says 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' This is an invitation for us to be accepted into God's Family.

Have you ever invited someone to a party and they haven't come?

Did they have a good excuse?

How did it make you feel?

This parable illustrates that sometimes we can fail to take up very generous offers. God's people are represented in this story by all the people that were gathered by the servants after the banquet was ready.

# 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 22:15-21

*The Pharisees got together and planned how they could trick Jesus into saying something wrong.*

*They sent some of their followers and some of herod's followers to say to him, "Teacher, we know that you are honest. You teach the truth about what God wants people to do. And you treat everyone with the same respect, no matter who they are. Tell us what you think: Should we pay taxes to the Emperor or not?"*

*Jesus knew their evil thoughts and said, "Why are you trying to test me? Let me see one of the coins used for paying taxes.*

*They brought him a silver coin, and he asked, "Whose picture and name are on it?"*

*"The emperors", they answered.*

*Then Jesus told them, "Give to the Emperor the things that belong to him and to God the things that are God's."*

## Some things to think about...

What things in our world belong to God?

In your Mini Vinnies work, what are some of the things that belong to God that we all need to care for and respect?

There are many gifts that we can offer to God:

- the time spent in a Mini Vinnies group,
- the prayers made in a Mini Vinnies group, and
- the gifts and talents we use to help people in need.

## Activity

- Make a list of some rules/laws that we have to follow, for example traffic rules or school rules. There are rules at home and even rules for games.
- The Bible tells us we should follow the laws of the land or the rules set by the government for the benefit of the rest of our community. It also reminds us that all things are God's, as the creator of heaven and Earth, and that we need to respect what is His, including animals, people and the environment.

## Teachers Notes

We all belong to God, as children of God. Everything on this Earth belongs to God. We need to treat each other, the environment, and animals with care and respect.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are within each of us. We are made in God's image and likeness. Therefore, the need to respect each other, especially those who are less fortunate or those who do not recognise Christ in their lives is extremely important.



# 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 22: 34-40

After Jesus had made the Sadducees look foolish, the Pharisees heard about it and got together.

One of them was an expert in Jewish Law so he tried to test Jesus saying, "Teacher what is the most important commandment in the Law?"

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.

## Some things to think about...

This is the first and most important commandment. The second is similar - 'Love others as yourself.' All the laws of Moses and the books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments."

Why are these commandments more important than any other?

What does it mean to love ourselves? How can we show love for ourselves?

If we love others as we love ourselves, how will we treat others, especially someone who might upset us?

How can we show people we love them?

## Activity

Materials needed for the activity: Balloons, Ribbons, Clear tape, Scissors, Textas

- On balloons write down key words from what Jesus tells us are the two most important commandments.
- You may wish to include names of people who may need extra love,
- As a group see if there are any words that are the same.
- Tie the balloons together and hang them in a sacred space until your next meeting.

## Teacher's Notes

St Vincent de Paul said, "You will find charity a heavy burden to bear, heavier than the bowl of soup and full basket. But you will keep your gentleness and your smile. It is not enough to give bread and soup. This the rich can do. You are the servant of the poor. They are your masters. The more difficult they will be, the more you must love them. It is for your love alone that the poor will forgive the bread you give them."

Sr Rosalie Rendu said to Frederic and his friends when they were visiting people in need in Paris, "Above all you must give the poor your love."

The challenge is to follow this example set by St Vincent de Paul and Sr Rosalie Rendu.



# 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 23:1-6 and 11-12

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses, so obey everything they teach you. But don’t do as they do. After all, they say one thing and do something else.

”They pile heavy burdens on people’s shoulders and won’t lift a finger to help them. Everything they do is just to show off in front of others. They even make a big show of wearing Scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, and they wear big tassels for everyone to see. They love the best seats at banquets and the front seats in the meeting places.

“Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of others. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured.

## Some things to think about...

Real solidarity begins when it is no longer a matter of ‘us’ and ‘them’. We can work together and struggle together against our common problems without ever treating one another as inferior or superior, but have mutual respect for one another.”

## Activity

- Materials needed for the activity: Old newspapers, paper, glue sticks or Bluetak, textas or pencils
- Give each participant a sheet of paper. Provide newspapers and glue sticks or Bluetak to share.
- Create a prayer for those we serve in our Mini Vinnies group by tearing letters, phrases or words from newspaper headlines and gluing these to the paper.
- You may want to use these prayers as opening and closing prayers for upcoming Mini Vinnies meetings or you might hang them to a wall or from string for everyone to read.

## Teachers Notes

Challenged to show their faith in action, Frederic and his room mate Auguste thought, “There must be a few old people feeling cold these days. Could we collect some firewood for them?” They knew an old man living in an attic a few doors away. There and then they loaded their arms with their own firewood and took it to him. Despite the old man’s pressing them to stay, they left for home immediately. Thinking about it afterwards, Frederic said, “The old man just wanted somebody to talk to. Next time we won’t rush so much. We’ll go earlier in the evening and stay a while.”

– Ozanam and Us: 25 Spiritual Readings

# 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus told the story about the kingdom of heaven. "The kingdom of heaven is like what happened one night when ten girls took their lamps and went to a wedding to meet the groom. Five of the girls were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but no extra oil. The ones who were wise took along extra oil for their lamps.

The groom was late arriving, and the girls became drowsy and fell asleep. Then in the middle of the night someone shouted, 'here's the groom! Come to meet him!'

When the girls got up and started getting their lamps ready, the foolish ones said to the others, 'Let us have some of your oil! Our lamps are going out.'

The girls who were wise answered, there's not enough oil for all of us. Go and buy some for yourselves.

While the foolish girls were on their way to get some oil, the groom arrived.

The girls who were ready went into the wedding and the doors were closed. Later the other girls returned and shouted, 'Sir, sir! Open the door for us!'

But the groom replied, 'I don't even know you.'

So, my disciples always be ready! You don't know the day or the time when all this will happen."

## Something to think about...

- Reflect on this year. What was good? What did you achieve? What was disappointing?
- What would you like to do differently or improve at next year?
- Where would we see Christ in our world today?
- Can we be Christians but sometimes not recognise when God is speaking to us?
- Can we be Christians but sometimes not recognise that God has made something happen in our lives for a reason?

## Activity

- Draw a yellow brick road and plot out from January to December the most exciting things, or events that happened in your life this year. It might be a birthday, a trip with your family or winning a sporting competition.
- Turn to the person next to you and finish this sentence: 'Next year I am going to...'
- What journey might be ahead this year? What is something exciting that might happen?
- Is there anything that is worrying you about next year?
- Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz had many distractions, adventures and challenges during her journey to visit the Wizard of Oz but eventually she made it with the help of her companions. Each character had different strengths and weaknesses that they had to use and overcome to complete their journey.





# 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 25:14-15, 19-21

*Jesus told his disciples the kingdom is like what happened when a man went away and put his three servants in charge of all he owned. The man knew what each servant could do. So he handed five thousand coins to the first servant, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third. Then he left the country.*

*Sometime later the master of those servants returned. He called them in and asked what they had done with his money. The servant, who had been given five thousand coins, brought them in with the five thousand that he had earned.*

*he said, 'Sir you gave me five thousand coins, and I have earned five thousand more,'*

*'Wonderful!' his master replied, 'You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!'*

## Some things to think about...

What are the different ways we can look after others, especially in the next couple of weeks leading up to Christmas?

Think of things that the Mini Vinnies group can do. E.g:

- Prepare Christmas hampers for local families.
- Make Christmas cards for elderly people living in aged care facilities or on their own.

- Have a fundraising activity to buy toys for the local Vinnies Conference to give to families.
- Have a Christmas concert and invite the residents from the local aged care facility for a morning tea.

## Activity

- Make some coins using gold paper or cardboard. In each of the coins, write down the different ways we can help others in need, especially in the weeks coming up to Christmas.

## Teachers Notes

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the challenge for each of us is the challenge of giving versus receiving. The challenge of helping others before ourselves is one that we are faced with throughout the year, but even more so at Christmas time.

Television commercials, newspapers and advertising material are focussed on all the things we can and "need" to buy to have a great Christmas.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the Mini Vinnies group can begin to think about how to make Christmas a little more special for those who are less fortunate, especially children their own age. There will be many children this Christmas who will wake up with no presents under their Christmas tree or who don't even have a Christmas tree.



# 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Matthew 25:31-46

*With the nations of the world before him; the Lord set those who were generous to his right and said to them, "Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick you took care of me and when I was in jail you visited me. Whenever you did it for any of my people, you did it for me."*

## Something to think about...

Whenever you help someone it is as though you are helping Jesus. This means that Jesus lives in every one of us.

St Vincent de Paul cared for those who were poor, prisoners, and the sick.

It can be easy to judge others but we need to remember that everyone has a story and everyone has needs. It is not just physical and material needs but it can also be the need of companionship and friendship.

Frederic and his companions cared for people in need in their local community and spread this throughout the world.

God sees all the good we do in this world. He knows of when we are kind and caring and in return wishes you a life of joy and happiness ("come and receive the kingdom").

## Activity

- Make a list of all the people who are in need of help either in your local community or around the world.
- Brainstorm the needs of each group of people.
- Assess what you can do to help and list these as 'Action'.
- Be creative about how you can help them directly through gifts and indirectly such as through prayer or awareness.
- On a large sheet of paper draw up a table similar to the one below and collate all the group's ideas

## Example template:

Group in need	What they need help with	Action
The hungry around the world	Food, clean drinking water, aid, education	Sponsorship, participate in the 40 Hour Famine etc.



# First Sunday of Advent

## Romans 13:11-13a

*Pauls letter to the Romans*

*Brothers and sisters, you know what sort of times we live in and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. Night is almost over and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. So behave properly, as people do in the day.*

## Something to think about...

We need to prepare for Jesus' coming at Christmas.

Think about how you prepare for Christmas at your home and school.

## Activity

- Make a list of things that you will do to prepare yourself for Jesus' coming at Christmas.
- Draw a giving tree of your own. Create leaves to place on the tree. On the leaves write your preparations for Jesus coming at Christmas.
- Does your giving tree contain the names of things or of people?
- Who would you put on the giving tree and why?

## Teachers Notes

Advent is a special time of preparation. It is a time that we use to celebrate our anticipation of Jesus' birth. We use an advent wreath to mark the four weeks of advent. The colours of advent are either purple or blue and rose, with the circular evergreen wreath symbolising eternal life and God's unity. The lighting of each candle signifies the accumulating light leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ; who is the light of the World. We prepare for Christmas by doing what God wills us to do, for example, doing what parents or teachers ask, helping younger siblings, being patient and giving gifts to those who would otherwise go without at Christmas (eg. a parish giving tree; Vinnies Christmas Appeal).

Your local parish or Conference may have a giving tree and the children may be able to bring in food and/or gifts to contribute to this.

Get them to think about what they would like to receive when they are thinking about gifts.

What could you give to those important people listed on your tree?  
What would be a special gift?

# Second Sunday of Advent

## Matt 3:1-11

*This is the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began just as God had said in the book of Isaiah the prophet; "I am sending my messenger to get the way ready for you. In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him'."*

*So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, "Turn back to God and be baptised! Then your sins will be forgiven." John also told the people, "Someone more powerful is going to come. And I am not good enough even to stoop down and untie his sandals. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."*

## Something to think about...

Think about a time where a big event was coming up. What did you, your family or community do in preparation for this event?

The more important something is to us the more we will prepare for it.

Think about your event and then think about how excited you were in the days before the event happened. What did you do in preparation for it happening? How important was the preparation?

## Activity

- In small groups, using pictures and words from magazines and newspapers etc create a collage of the items that symbolise the spirit of Christmas such as caring (hugs), sharing, celebrations and new life.
- Pretend you are John trying to prepare everyone for the Lord's coming. Make a poster to put up in your school with a Christmas theme that is designed to get everyone excited and prepared for the birth of Jesus Christ.

## Teachers Notes

Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, Advent is a time of preparation, just like we prepare for special sacraments and events in our lives.

There was a lot of excitement, nervousness and anticipation about the Lord's arrival.

The message was shouted, heard and passed along. This is just like the excitement of us preparing for Christmas now when we sing Christmas carols and decorate our homes.

Encourage the children to think about what they would like to receive for Christmas gifts and also the necessities of Christmas day such as wrapping paper, paper plates, napkins and decorative items.

Encourage thoughtful prayer at the same time as thinking about and giving gifts as this is just as important and valuable to those in need.

# Third Sunday of Advent

## Matt 11:2-11

*John was in prison when he heard what Christ was doing.*

*So John sent some of his followers to ask Jesus,*

*“Are you the one we should be looking for? Or must we wait for someone else?”*

*Jesus answered, “Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People with leprosy are being healed, and the deaf can hear.*

*“The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news.*

*“God will bless everyone who does not reject me because of what I do.”*

*As John’s followers were going away, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John:*

*“What sort of person did you go out into the desert to see? Was he like tall grass blown by the wind?*

*“What kind of man did you go out to see? Was he someone dressed in fine clothes? People who dress like that live in the king’s palace.*

*“What did you really go to see? Was he a prophet? he certainly was. I tell you that he was more than a prophet. In the Scriptures God says about him, “I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you.”*

*“I tell you that no one ever born on this earth is greater than John the Baptist. But whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.”*

## Activity

- How can you prepare the way for others to help those in need? Can you promote Vinnies and their works further? Can you lead by example for those who follow you such as younger siblings and students at your school?
- How would you advertise God’s arrival in town? Create an advertisement that depicts the big party that Christians would have been preparing for. You may want to create a poster using pictures from the internet or magazines.

## Teachers Notes

Talk about the way both St Vincent de Paul and Frederic lead the way for others like John the Baptist did for Jesus. Discuss how at times we are called upon to be leaders and not just followers.

Ask the group how do they think they can be leaders and who do they consider to be their leaders?

What qualities do good leaders need to show?

Discuss the story of how the Society started with Frederic being asked to prove who he truly was just as John was by priests and temple helpers.

Frederic was only 19 years old when he decided to be a leader to those who helped the poor. He was still a teenager! his one initiative is now an international charitable organisation with lots of people young and old following in his footsteps.

How inspirational to know that the very first leader of Vinnies was a young person just like us!

# Fourth Sunday of Advent

## Matt 1:18-24

*This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learnt that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit.*

*Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.*

*While Joseph was thinking about all this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream.*

*The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

*So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said,*

*"A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."*

*After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do.*



## Something to think about...

Mary showed a lot of faith in God by accepting God's plans for her. Her strong belief and trust in God, among other characteristics, made her the most special person to carry the son of God. How can we be servants to the Lord and each other? How do you say "yes" to God in your life?

## Activity

- List the ways you say "yes" to God in your life.
- Are there other areas where you could accept God's will?
- How can we encourage others to be brave and give their time, love and care at Christmas without fear or hesitation? Some ways we might be able to do this is to help someone on the playground who might be sad or alone. This is what we are called to do, to love God and others.
- Can you think of other ways?





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