

# Lenten Reflections

This Lent, to help prepare you for the passion and resurrection of Christ, we have prepared a series of daily reflections. Available will be three sets of eight reflections, each set around the three temptations of Christ in the desert. Then to finish, there will be 14 daily reflections, up to Good Friday, aiding contemplation on the Stations of the Cross. Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent and so we haven't included a daily reflection for each Sunday.

**“You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.” Luke 4:8**

## **Tuesday, March 22nd - The Golden Calf**

Something I've often wondered is how the Israelites so quickly forgot their covenant with God while Moses was up on the Mount. Here's the deal though: upon further reflection, I'm not sure they did. In the midst of their uncertainty surrounding Moses' extended absence, they do what most of us would probably do and decide to take matters into their own hands, opting for control rather than doubt. Instead of completely rebelling against God, the Israelites are ascribing the image of the Golden Calf to the very role of God. Essentially, they are treating God as a toy on the shelf, one that they've made on their own, and, in turn, can be isolated and dismissed when they don't need Him, but picked up and dusted off when they do. How often do we do this ourselves? More often than not, when we turn away from God, we aren't completely rebelling against Him. Instead, we're putting Him in a corner to gain dust until we need Him again.

*What are some things we can do to always keep God close in our Vincentian work?*

## Wednesday, March 23rd - The Listening Game

We have spoken previously on how God knows our mind, which increases our ability to trust in Him. In the same way Jesus also tells us not to “babble” in prayer as, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” So, if we’re not to spend our prayer/worship time speaking, what should we be doing? Listening! And we should be listening more than speaking, for who in our relationships with God has all the advice and love to speak of? How many of us practice just listening and waiting patiently in silence?

*A great number of the saints advise us to let God do the heavy lifting. St Vincent de Paul tells us himself, “Let us allow God to act; He brings things to completion when we least expect it.” How often do you struggle when you could just give everything up to God? If this is difficult for you, why do you think that it is?*

## Thursday, March 24th - The Mass

Bl. Frédéric Ozanam said, “the best way to economise time is to “lose” half an hour each day attending Holy Mass.” The Mass is the holiest prayer of the Church. The Mass builds to a crescendo through the proclamation of the readings, the words of the priest in the homily, the intercessory prayers, and the offerings, to Christ Himself present to us, just as He was present to His mother on the cross. The Mass is the same sacrifice as Calvary and as such, our journey to the consecration is a great and wonderful pilgrimage. We may make that pilgrimage every day or week, but it is still the most important physical and spiritual journey we undertake.

*Is this pilgrimage part of your Vincentian pilgrimage? We are members of the SVDP but our path to Vincentianism is not an instant one. One way to strengthen and speed our steps to holiness is to make each step with Christ in the Mass.*

## Friday, March 25th - Adoration

To love and be loved. To sit feeling your heart wrench with uncontrollable, overwhelming, overpowering love. To feel that love returned in an intense and even stronger wave of ecstasy. To feel sorrow and hatred being obliterated inside your soul by that all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present Father. Is that not complete adoration? We are just lost in the immense glory and majesty of God, we are enveloped in grace to the point of drowning, but as we sink yet deeper in grace we are not suffocated, instead we find a taste of true, eternal life, the life we were born to inherit. This feeling, this knowing, is not just found in Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacraments, but also in people. Every time we meet someone, we have the opportunity to adore Christ present within them. For us Vincentians, this is the very essence of our charism and a key part of our service to others. Recognizing Christ present in the Eucharist can be a challenge. Recognizing Christ in each other is our life's mission.

*The Rule tells us that "In the poor, they see the suffering Christ" (1.8). In your visits to the needy, have you encountered Christ and adored Him?*

## Saturday, March 26th - Heaven Within Yourself

The idea of heaven is one readily deployed by our secular brothers and sisters, especially in advertisements. Many people have an idea of what heaven looks like, from a comfy armchair and a Netflix subscription to a tropical beach. However, generally everyone imagines heaven as a place they can go to, an escape from the world. The love we can lightly grasp in prayer is a foretaste of the eternal, divine love that awaits us and that constitutes heaven itself.

*Are you escaping to a place called heaven or are you finding and longing for the true heaven within yourself? When you share love with fellow Vincentians and neighbors, you are sharing heaven.*

## Monday, March 28th - What Are You Truly Searching For?

How many lost individuals have we encountered in our God-given ministry? How many on a journey but yet still searching? How many people are climbing a mountain to find God? What are they searching for? Vocation? A place in life? Peace? But do they really need to search? Is God not at the bottom of the mountain as well as the top? Is not God with them where they are instead of where they think He will be?

*What are you searching for? God has been with you all along; you have no need to search. You may feel lost in this world, but do not feel lost from God, He is with you and will be with you eternally. When was a time when you felt completely sure of God's presence with you?*

## Tuesday, March 29th - Loving

What is love? Is it a feeling? An emotion? A drive or desire for something or someone? The secular understanding of love is much different than a divine understanding of love. Oftentimes, the secular view of love is more self-centered. "Love" from a secular view focuses upon attraction and desire. But true love, from a divine perspective, is very different. Divine love is not about wanting, taking, desiring, feeling, etc. Divine love is about giving. It's about giving of oneself to another. And it's not just about giving some of yourself away, it's about giving "everything" away. This doesn't mean that you have nothing left. The beautiful nature of divine love is that it is never ending. The more one gives themselves away, the more they have.

*Our ministry is completely in keeping with this ideology. We give generously of our time, our possessions, ourselves. We expect nothing in return, but yet know that our reward is great beyond measure. When have you loved our neighbors without fear in your Vincentian ministry?*

## Wednesday, March 30th - Humility and Loving Yourself

Humility is the mother of all virtue and a central Vincentian virtue. St Vincent de Paul himself tells us, "Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying." An aspect of that truth also reminds us not to belittle ourselves. We were made by God. All of us are God's masterpieces. All of us are special. Therefore, we are all equal. No human achievement, no human power, no human fame and fortune is enough reason to think we are greater than others. We all achieved these things with God's grace. We all obtained these things with God's permission. The truth is, when we think of ourselves less, and thereby think of others more, we think of God more as well. "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

*We are dust and unto dust we shall return. It is through God that dust can bring love, hope, and joy. Praise God for His glorious work within and through you.*

Please keep your eye out for the Stations of the Cross