The Miraculous Medal Association Australia

AMM National Office, 172 Balaclava Rd, Marsfield, NSW 2122.
Phone: (02) 9878 4617.

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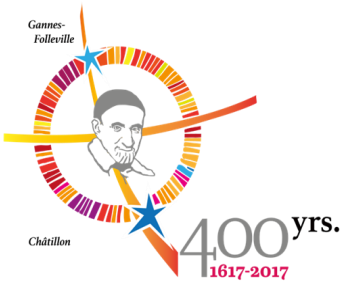

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY ON THE FOURTH CENTENARY OF THE CHARISM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good day!

Thank you for your warm welcome, and thanks to the Superior General for introducing our encounter.

I greet you and together with you I thank the Lord for the 400 years of your charism. Saint Vincent generated a zeal for charity which has endured through the centuries: a passion that came from his heart. For this reason we have his relic here today: the heart of Saint Vincent. Today I would like to encourage you to continue this journey, offering you three simple verbs which I believe are very important for the Vincentian spirit, but also for Christian life in general: **to adore**, **to welcome**, **to go**.

To adore. Saint Vincent made countless invitations to cultivate the interior life and dedicate oneself to prayer which purifies and opens the heart. It is the compass for every day; it is like a manual for life; it is — he wrote — the "great book for the preacher": only by praying does one draw from God the love to pour forth on the world; only by praying does one touch people's hearts when one proclaims the Gospel (cf. Letter to A. Durand, 1658). But for Saint Vincent prayer is not only a duty and much less a collection of formulae. Prayer is pausing before God in order to be with him, simply dedicating oneself to him. This is the purest prayer, that which makes space for the Lord and for his praise, and nothing else: adoration.

Once discovered, adoration becomes indispensable, because it is pure intimacy with the Lord, who gives peace and joy, and dissolves the stresses of life. Therefore, to someone who was under particular pres-

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November 27th is the Feast of the Manifestation of the Miraculous Medal to St Catherine Laboure.

Our annual celebration of this Feast will take place in St Anthony's Church, Marsfield, on Saturday November 25th at 10.00 am.

sure, Saint Vincent also advised praying “without mental strain, to immerse themselves in God by a simple consideration with no attempt to gain His presence by emotional efforts, to abandon themselves to Him” (Letter to G. Pesnelle, 1659).

This is adoration: placing oneself before God, with respect, calmly and in silence, giving the first place to him, abandoning oneself trustingly. Then to ask that his Spirit may come to us and let what is ours go to him. In this way too, people in need, urgent problems, burdensome and difficult situations and problems become part of adoration, such that Saint Vincent asked that one “adore in God” even the reasons that one struggles to understand and accept (cf. Letter to F. Get, 1659). One who adores, who takes up the living wellspring of love cannot but be left, so to speak, “contaminated”. And he begins to behave with others as the Lord does with him: he becomes more merciful, more understanding, more willing; he overcomes his own rigidity and opens himself to others.

And thus we arrive at the second verb: **to welcome**. When we hear this word, we immediately think of something to do. But in reality welcoming is a more profound disposition: it requires not only making room for someone, but being a welcoming, available person, accustomed to giving oneself to others. As God does for us, so we do for others. Welcoming means putting things into perspective, setting right my way of thinking, understanding that life is not my private property and that time does not belong to me. It is a gradual parting from all that is mine: my time, my rest, my rights, my plans, my agenda. One who welcomes gives up the “me” and allows “you” and “us” to enter his life.

A welcoming Christian is a true man or woman of the Church, because the Church is Mother and a mother welcomes life and accompanies it. And as a child resembles its mother, bearing her features, so a Christian bears the traits of the Church. So a child truly faithful to the Church is one who is welcoming, who creates harmony and communion without lamenting, and sows peace with generosity, even if it is not reciprocated. Saint Vincent helps us to appreciate this ecclesial “dna” of welcoming, of openness, of communion, so that in our life “all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander [may] be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:31).

The last verb is **to go**. Love is dynamic; it goes forth from itself. One who loves does not sit in an easy chair looking on, waiting for the advent of a better world, but gets up and goes with enthusiasm and simplicity. Saint Vincent said it well: “our vocation is to go, not just to one parish, not just to one diocese, but all over the world; and to do what? To set people’s hearts on fire, to do what the Son of God did. He came to set the world on fire in order to inflame it with His love (Conference of 30 May 1659). This vocation is always valid for everyone. It poses three questions to each of us: “Do I go to encounter others, as the Lord wishes? Do I carry this flame of charity everywhere, or do I remain locked in, warming myself at my hearth?”

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you because you are moving along the world’s streets, as Saint Vincent would ask of you even today. I hope you do not stop, but continue, from adoration, to draw God’s love each day, and to spread it in the world through the infectious good of charity, of openness, of harmony. I bless you all and the poor whom you encounter. And I ask you, please, that you kindly not forget to pray for me.

14 October 2017

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SOME NEWS ITEMS

1. Formation Day at Marsfield, Sydney:
A good number of our members attended the Formation morning held at Marsfield on Saturday September 16th. And it was good to hear some say "we should have more of these." The theme was based on the 400 years of the Vincentian charism, and originally this was to have been something of a National encounter, an E Conference, so that, through our website, other members scattered around the country could have gathered together and then would have been able to take part by watching and hearing the input given by Fr Kevin Canty CM on the journey of St Vincent at Folleville and Chatillon and by Sr Therese Haywood DC on the Vincentian Charism. Unfortunately we were not able to arrange the morning as we had hoped, but as our next item indicates, what was presented is available to those who were not there.

2. AMM WEBSITE: As mentioned in our last issue, the AMM in Australia now has a Website : amm.org.au This has been up and running for a few weeks now. We are still working on it and hope to add regular items—news, formation articles, etc, during each month. The most important item now available is what took place at the formation morning mentioned above in Item 1.

Living Life in the Spirit (part 3 continuing our reflection on prayer and Spirituality.)

"Lord, teach us how to pray, .." (Luke 11:1)

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER
The soul of Christian Spirituality is Prayer. Because we are alive, we breathe; because we have faith, we pray.
Prayer is our personal relationship with God, and, as Christians, with Christ.

Relationship means interaction - openness one to the other, response of one to the other.
Our response: - response in faith (conversion);
- response to the Spirit;
- communal, liturgical prayer;
- experience of the Lord of the poor;
- contemplation in action.

Contemporary Definitions of Prayer.
"Prayer is a communication in which God's word has the initiative, and we, at first, are simply listeners. Consequently, what we have to do is, first, listen to God's word and then through that word, learn how to listen." - Hans Urs von Balthasar.
"What then is prayer? We shall see that it is by no means easy to answer this question... ... Let us begin with one simple fact, so often regarded as a spiritual cliche that we tend to pass too lightly over it.
"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God." - Karl Rahner.
"Prayer is an awareness of one's inner self and a consciousness of one's union with God in Christ." - Thomas Merton.
"Prayer, a loving response and communion with God." - Basil Pennington.
"In prayer we open ourselves out to God, and this process is one of liberation and awakening." - Kenneth Leech.
"To pray ... means to think and live in the presence of God." - Henri Nouwen.

Elements of Authentic Christian Prayer:

1. Prayer is an interpersonal relationship. 2. Prayer is a relationship between two liberties. 3. Prayer originates in God, emerges as our response to God's presence, God's word. 4. Prayer is rooted in our incompleteness, in our desire for union. 5. Prayer involves the whole person, body and mind, intellect and emotions, individually and communally.

Prerequisites for ALL Prayer : Faith in a living personal, God; faith in God's real, immediate presence; faith in possibility of a realistic relationship with God who is present and active in our lives.

AUTHENTIC PRAYER Today we might hear the call to "pray without ceasing". Perhaps what is referred to here is an attitude of 'PRAYERFULNESS', rather than being one who "prays" or "says prayers". How can we "pray without ceasing"?

1. Prayer seen as specific activity, e.g., certain times of the day, using various methods or techniques, commitment to prayer..... Without this our other activities would cease to be prayerful; they could well become distractions from prayer.
2. Other activities as "Prayer" in the broader sense, as they represent a practical expression of some attitude, e.g., disposing our will to God, listening to God in the events of life, attentive to God in events and people; leading to a prayerfulness in life.

THREE MOVEMENTS OF AUTHENTIC PRAYER

1. **From external things to interior of person** - traditionally called "Recollection". Is it actually prayer or prelude to prayer? We become more aware of what is going on within us - in touch with our true self. 2. **From interior of person to God** - avoids pathological journey into ourselves. 3. **From God to others in charity and service** - prayer makes a difference in our lives - not just God and me, but God working through me into the lives of others - efforts to build the Reign of God. (We need to be explicitly aware of these three movements in prayer.. (They are not stages we pass through; more like a spiral. We move in and out of each stage.)

"Prayer is our means of taking a sighting, of re-orienting ourselves – by re-establishing contact with our goal. In the presence of God many components of our life fall into perspective and our journey begins to make more sense. We look towards God, conscious that seeking what is unseen corresponds to a very deep stratum of our being. It is not just a bright idea or a fad; it grows from the soil of the heart. Prayer is inseparable from living.

The worst thing we can think about prayer is that it is a trivial exercise – saying a few words or channelling one's thoughts in a particular direction. Authentic prayer is not that. It is usually difficult. That is not because it takes great expertise or is reserved to an elite, but because it takes a lot of courage. To pray well I must first find out where I am.

Self-knowledge is never procured cheaply. To pray well I need to face up to realities about myself, that I would prefer to ignore: my anxieties, fears, private griefs, failures, lovelessness, my utter lack of resources. To accept the truth about what I am, as also the truth about other human beings, demands courage. If I do not pray well, it is usually because I lack that kind of courage.

Once I have confronted and accepted – as far as possible – that I am a needy person, the act of turning towards God is relatively easy. It is not faith in God that is hard, but the renunciation of illusory faith in myself. To turn towards God means, first, turning away from whatever is untrue or delusory – no matter how much comfort it brings." ('Towards God' – The Western Tradition of Contemplation : Michael Casey, page 5)

Fr Kevin Canty, CM. National Director.