



Essential Evangelization

St. Vincent de Paul

In this Sunday's readings, Jesus gives us a parable about the striking contrast between the earthly life of an unnamed rich man and the poor beggar Lazarus. In eternity, God's perfect justice reverses their roles and puts the rich man in the reality of hell begging mercy from Lazarus. And "coincidentally" this week Monday we also celebrate the feast day of one great champion of the poor and charity, St. Vincent de Paul.

Vincent was born in 1580 in Gascony, France, one of seven brothers and sisters of a peasant farm family. It is said that he joined the priesthood with little ambition and to lead a life of comfort in the Church. He said of himself, if it were not for the grace of God, he would have been "hard and repulsive, rough and cross." It was not long however that Vincent's hard heart was changed by the deathbed confession of a dying servant. His life of "comfort" was also later interrupted by his kidnapping by pirates and a brief life of slavery. He escaped soon afterwards after converting his master to Christianity in the process!

With a renewed heart for the poor of France and beyond and a great passion to evangelize, Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission or Vincentians, and the Daughters of Charity which later became the great ministry of Mother Teresa. He established evangelization missions, hospitals, ministered to the needs of the enslaved and distributed food for the poor to help thousands annually. Ironically, the society that bears his name was established over 170 years after his death by admirers of his great work. Today the Society of St. Vincent de Paul assists the poor and imprisoned in 132 countries and is one of the great ministries of the most prolific charitable organization on earth, the Catholic Church. St. Vincent was declared a Saint in 1737 and his relics and heart today lie incorruptible in the church of Paris that bears his name.

"Strive to live content in the midst of those things that cause you discontent. Free your mind from all that troubles you, God will take care of things.....he sees that you do not honor him sufficiently with holy trust. Trust in him, I beg you, and you will have the fulfillment of what your heart desires."

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This is one of a series of articles
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