



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

PEACE OUT

A Collection of Spiritual Reflections for Young People
ISSUE 3



WWW.VINNIES.ORG.AU

Our 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.

Our Vision

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognized as a caring Catholic charity offering 'a hand up' to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

Peace Out

A Collection of Spiritual Reflections for Young People
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, Youth and Young Adults
For more information: youth@vinnies.org.au

The spiritual reflections in this document have been written and/or compiled by the following Vinnies Youth members and employees: Rebecca Bromhead, Jessica Pollard, Gabrielle Franco, Michelle Kot, Julie Simpson, Peter Figg, Penelope Foster, Josie Charbel, Kate Giumelli, Kelsay Correa, Jeannine Ashton.

www.vinnies.org.au
ABN: 46 472 591 335



Contents

Our Mission Statement.....	2
Our Vision Statement.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Prayer of the Aboriginal People.....	6
Hope in times of despair.....	7
Giving and Receiving.....	8
Living in the here and now.....	9
We are one.....	10
Making Connections.....	12
Heart of Darfur.....	13
Butterfly reflection.....	14
A Franciscan Benediction.....	15
Apology to My Brothers and Sisters in Developing Countries.....	16
Keeping the Dream.....	17
Mind Sweeping.....	18
Walk On.....	20
Inspiration from Society founders.....	22
Mad World.....	23
Meditation and Prayer.....	24
Social Inclusion 2010: Inclusion or Exclusion?.....	26



Introduction

This Collection of Spiritual Reflections is a resource for Vinnies Young Adult members, groups, conferences and volunteers. It is also for teachers to share with members of St Vincent de Paul Conferences, Social Justice Groups or Religious Education classes within their schools.

These reflections have been prepared for young people to take some time out to reflect on different areas of life and look at them from a Christian and particularly, a Vincentian viewpoint. Each reflection is based around a theme and contains a reading and some discussion questions or activities based around that theme.

We hope you find this Collection of Spiritual Reflections a useful resource and that you take the opportunity to allow yourself and your group or students some 'time out.'

If you would like a version of this publication that would reproduce well on a photocopier, please visit www.vinnies.org.au/youth-resources-nsw.



Prayer of the Aboriginal People

In November 1986 Pope John Paul II visited Australia. One stop in his itinerary was a meeting with Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. This prayer was written for the occasion by members of the Aboriginal Catholic community in Alice Springs in consultation with groups represented on the National Aboriginal and Islander Advisory Committee for the Pope's visit.

*Father,
you gave us The Dreaming.
You have always spoken to us
through our belief.
You then made your love clear to us
in the message of Jesus.
We thank you for your care.
You own us, you are our hope!
Make us strong as we face the
problem of change.
We ask you to help the people of
Australia to listen to us and respect
our belief.
We can only know you and ourselves
in our culture.
Make the knowledge of you grow
strong in all people so that you can find
a home in us
and we can make a home
for everyone in our land.*



Hope in times of despair

The Huxley's were a normal Australian family living in suburb of Sydney. The Huxley's have two daughters Lauren and Simone. In November 2005 their youngest daughter Lauren who was 18 years old was violently attacked in their family home by a total stranger and left to die. Beaten repeatedly and soaked with petrol as her home burned, her life was hanging by a thread. Doctors gave Lauren only a 5% chance of survival. The below extract is taken from an interview with Lauren's mother, Christine, that was conducted by ABC Radio. It begins with her mother describing the extent of Lauren's injuries.

Christine: Her hand was so swollen, she looked like a football or a watermelon, she had no eyes, she was linked up to all these support systems, she had a trachea and was being tube fed, and it was very very daunting to have to look at your beautiful daughter like that.

ABC Radio: Did you feel that she was able to hear you?

Christine: Yes, it is funny, but we used to see the heart monitor go up when you actually used to talk to her.

ABC Radio: There'd be a response on the heart monitor?

Christine: Yes, you'd see the heart monitor go up and that's what gave us the courage to get back in there and keep on talking to her.

So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth. Job 5:15

Lauren's family were extremely protective of their daughter and stuck a sign above her

bed instructing the staff that she could hear everything that was being said and that they needed to ensure that only positive comments were made in her presence.

In the years following the attack Lauren has undergone several operations and has endured many weeks and months of rehabilitation. She has made a remarkable recovery and is very proud of how far she has come. "If there's one thing I've learned it's that the pleasure in life is doing what other people say you can't." The Australian musician Alex Lloyd wrote "Song of Hope" for Lauren after hearing about her struggle to survive.

Try and find a copy of Alex Lloyd's "Song of Hope" and play it while the group reflects.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Listen to the words to Song of Hope. What does hope mean to you? How do you hold onto hope in times of struggle?

Think of the people in your life who make your heart rate increase when you hear their voice. Thinking about your Vinnies work, can you think of times when it has been difficult to tell whether or not an impact was being made by your work?

How do you pass hope on through your Vinnies work?

To listen to the full interview with Christine Huxley follow this link:
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2009/05/15/2571695.htm?site=brisbane>

Giving and Receiving

This prayer is based on the scriptural imperative to give of what we have received. Our gifts are recalled and named so we can see our abundance. We then respond with our willingness to share this abundance with others.

Before this prayer, read these passages: Luke 6:37-38; Matthew 10:8. Take some time for dialogue to reflect upon individual gifts and talents among those who have gathered. For example: Name five gifts or talents for which you are particularly grateful; or, for which gift in your life are you most grateful?

To each sentence, respond as a group: *The gift I have received, I will give as a gift.*

*You have received mercy, kindness, and unconditional love from our God
You have many physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual abilities that can be used to better the lives of others*

You have people in your life who have believed in you when you did not believe in yourself, people who stood by you in your difficult times

You have a heart capable of great compassion, empathy, and tenderness

You have inner strength, the grace of conversion, the gift of hope, and the desire for good

You have food on your table, clothes in your closet, and a roof over your head

You have access to medical care, good education, music and the arts, and numerous sources of communication

You have religious freedom, the power of free speech, advocacy groups, and structures for promoting justice and protecting citizens

You have a marvelous planet on which to live, with beautiful forests, rich soil for growing food, priceless minerals, precious creatures of all kinds

You have the opportunity for spiritual renewal, growth, and maturity in your relationship with the divine, continual access to opportunities for faith development

Together
Gracious Giver, so much has been bestowed upon me. I lack for little and yet yearn for so much. Continue to teach me to appreciate what has come to me as blessing and gift. Keep on urging and challenging me to share what I have. Help me to give generously and freely of my bounty. I offer you my thanks for all that has been granted to me. Amen.

Taken from *Out of the Ordinary* © 2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved.

Living in the Here and Now

There is story in “Indian tradition, of a man who was being chased by a tiger. The fellow ran and ran until he reached a well. He jumped into the well and landed on a tree limb that was jutting out into the middle of the well. He looked up. The tiger was waiting for him at the top of the well. He looked down and he saw poisonous snakes. He looked around him and it was the fruit season. He stretched out his hand and began to taste and enjoy a ripe fruit.

Now think about this. This is meaningful psychology and spirituality and a wonderful way to live. Just because there is a tiger above me, just because there are snakes down below, why should I deprive myself of the beauty and the gift of the moment? How often are we afraid of the tigers that are waiting for us”. A tiger called assessment tasks, mobile phone bill, what do they think about me, my love of power and self importance...

“But you know what? While you are sitting thinking about the tiger over there, your body is here. Your mind is there and your body is here. You are not whole... your mind will not allow you to live in the moment. It either regrets the past or is anxious about the future. Why did I waste all that time worrying...? Better to eat the fruit, enjoy the moment ...”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What have you been worrying about lately?

What have you been missing in the present moment? Discuss in groups how this story has affected you and what you can do about it?

Paul Coutinho, SJ, *How Big is Your God? The Freedom to Experience the Divine*. Loyola Press 2007. Chapter 32 Page 109
110

We are One

Place a large globe on a stand in the center of the group. In each of the four directions, place various colored cloths and items that are symbolic of people who dwell in each of the four directions of the Earth. For the voices: various readers alternate as the voice of the people. All readers proclaim the last line together: *We are one.* The whole group then repeats after them: *We are one.* *
In the tradition of our Native American sisters and brothers, we address the four directions of the Earth, remembering how the Spirit of God resides there and how all of us are united as one.

East

All face the east (place silken cloths, Buddhist bell or gong).

*I am the people of the East.
I am the Chinese merchant.
I am the veiled woman of Iran.
I am the Vietnamese fishing family.
I am the Tibetan Buddhist nun.
I am the office worker biking in crowded streets.
I am the herder of reindeer in Lapland.
I am the forgotten one on the streets of Calcutta.
I am the mountain climber of the Himalayas.
I am your sister.
I am your brother.
We are one.*

Prayer

This prayer follows after the voices of each direction.

Creator of All, we join our minds and hearts with the people of our planet Earth. We recognize the deep bond that we have with each created being. We rejoice in your sacred presence among us and within us. Divine Oneness, we celebrate the goodness, the beauty, the talents, and the spirituality of all these brothers and sisters of ours. We stand in solidarity with all those who suffer in any way. Rekindle our love, revitalize our compassion, and renew our awareness of the unity we share with all beings.

South

All face the south (place woven fabrics of bright colors, rattles).

*I am the people of South.
I am the weavers of colorful cloth in South America.
I am the singers and dancers of Haiti.
I am the surviving bush-people of the Kalahari Desert.
I am the factory worker in Mexico.
I am the mother of the disappeared in Central America.
I am the orphanage director in Africa.
I am the village shaman in the South Pacific Islands.
I am the aboriginal children playing in Australia.
I am your sister.
I am your brother.
We are one.*

Prayer

(as above)

West

All face the west (place cottons and denim, flute).

*I am the people of the West.
I am the shepherds of the Alps.
I am the forester ranger in the Rockies.
I am the winemaker in the Mediterranean.
I am the housewife in Poland.
I am the rancher in unfenced lands.
I am the widow in Bosnia.
I am the child in a high-rise apartment.
I am the nurse practitioner in a clinic.
I am the peacekeepers in war-torn lands.
I am your sister.
I am your brother.
We are one.*



Prayer

(as above)

North

All face the north (place furs or other warm material, drums).

*I am the people of the North.
I am the children of Ojibway tribe.
I am the Inuit fishing in glacial waters.
I am the teacher in Vancouver.
I am the European immigrant.
I am the Huron native organizing for justice.
I am the grandmother in Nova Scotia.
I am the farmer on the Canadian prairie.
I am the oil worker in Alaska.
I am the waitress in a rural caf .
I am your sister.
I am your brother.
We are one.*

Prayer

(as above)

*As an adaptation of this ritual, after the voices of one direction have been proclaimed, there could be a pause and those present could add other voices that come to mind for that particular direction. Also, a song that is representative of that direction could also be sung; or the refrain from a song that speaks to our oneness with all beings could be sung at the close of each direction.

Taken from *Out of the Ordinary* © 2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved.

Making Connections

Work in groups of three or four. Read the following Gospel passages and quotes and discuss your thoughts, feelings and reactions. Then, on your own, write your personal experiences as a young person that relate to those same passages.

COMPASSION

Matthew 9:36
Mark 1:40-42

*To feel the pain of another
It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible.*
St Vincent de Paul

SOCIAL JUSTICE

James 2: 15 -17
Micah 6:8

Justice demands a consecration of each one for the welfare of all and especially for the protection of the weak.
Frederic Ozanam

INCLUSIVENESS

“To respond to the needs of the individuals”
John 4:1-10

It is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. The violent clash of luxury and poverty is shaking the ground under our feet.
Frederic Ozanam

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

SELF-CENTRED – Write down the ways you focus only on yourself, on your needs and desires, throughout the day/month/year.

CHRIST-CENTRED – Write down all the ways you focus on the needs of others, how you gave yourself to others, throughout the day/month/year.

Some role models you could look at – Frederic Ozanam, St Vincent de Paul, St Louise de Marillac and Mother Teresa.

Heart of Darfur

While we worked and worried and slept in the cold, the rest of the world carried on, unaware. Other tragedies and dramas occupied the minds of those living in the affluent west. The Bali bombings had unleashed such terror, leaving people reeling with fear. The earthquake in Kashmir killed 80,000 and winter was about to set in. To draw the public closer to the suffering, Angelina Jolie traveled to Pakistan, to be seen amongst the rubble and deprivation. When she urged for more aid, people listened and donated. Everyone wanted to see Angelina, and her beauty was a vehicle for their compassion.

Closer to the hearts of many, Hurricane Wilma wrought untold damage as it swept across Florida, Mexico and Central America. Loss and suffering, helplessness and fear were brought closer to home. People's own lives were touched and compassion was given meaning. Our drama in a small corner of Darfur was one of many, our needs and frustrations just part of living in a chaotic, mad world. But it gave my life meaning, to be part of a solution, no matter how small. Seeing the overwhelming needs and fears in the world we can all be excused for wanting to withdraw. When there is nothing you can do but watch the misery of others lives it is self-preservation to close your ears and eyes. I know because I have done it often. But stepping forward and participating, allowing yourself to feel and see and reach out, can cure apathy. It's about being part of the chaos and refusing to accept all the madness. It comes down to choice .

French Blaker, L. (2007) Heart of Darfur. London: Hodder & Stoughton. (p.106)

Matthew 13:15-16

This people's heart has grown coarse, their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear, their heart to understand, changing their ways and being healed by me. 'But blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

In your Vincentian works, have you ever felt the frustration of living in a chaotic world?

Frederic Ozanam was challenged to take action against injustice. Faced with so much adversity in our world today, where do we start to be part of the solution he worked so tirelessly for?

Have you ever found yourself closing your eyes and ears to the need of others? What have you learned from this experience?

St Vincent de Paul taught us to see Christ in the poor. Considering the words of Matthew 13, in what ways do you feel blessed to have seen and heard the plight of those who are in need?

Butterfly Reflection

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get

through the tiny opening were the Goddess's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieve its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If the Goddess allowed us to go through our lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly!

I asked for Strength.....
And God gave me
Difficulties.
I asked for Wisdom.....
And God gave me
Problems to solve.
I asked for Prosperity.....
And God gave me
Brain and Brawn.
I asked for Courage.....
And God gave me
Danger to overcome.
I asked for Love.....
And God gave me
Troubled people to help.
I asked for Favours.....
And God gave me
Opportunities.
I received nothing I wanted I received
everything I needed!

*Over this violence thing Peace- The Still Small Voice , 2003,
National Council of Churches in Australia Youth Network.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

In our Vinnies work, what is the difference between "Being a voice for the voiceless" and "Strengthening the voices of the voiceless"?

When is a time you've been tempted to jump in and try and fix someone's problems for them? Has this helped them? Why/why not? Read over our Vinnies Mission Statement. How does this relate to the passage above?

A Franciscan Benediction



May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears
to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that we can make a difference in this world so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Apology to My Brothers and Sisters in Developing Countries

To my brothers and sisters in developing countries:

While I was deciding which oat bran cereal to eat this morning, you were searching the ground for leftover grains from the passing wheat truck.

While I was jogging at the health centre, you were working in the wealthy landowner's field under a scorching sun.

While I was choosing between diet and regular soda, your parched lips were yearning for a sip of clean water.

While I complained about the poor service in the gourmet restaurant, you were gratefully eating a bowl of rice.

While I poured my "fresh and better" detergent into the washing machine, you stood in the river with your bundle of clothes.

While I watched the evening news on my wide-screen television set, you were being terrorized and taunted by a dictatorial government.

While I read the newspaper and drank my cup of steaming coffee, you walked a long, dusty miles to a crowded schoolroom to learn how to read.

While I scanned the ads for a bargain on an extra piece of clothing, you woke up and put on the same shirt and pants that you have worn for many months.

While I built a fourteen-room house for the three of us, your family of ten found shelter in a one-room hut.

While I went to church last Sunday and felt more than slightly bored, you stood on the land with those around you and felt gratitude to God for being alive for one more day.

My brothers and sisters, forgive me for my arrogance and my indifference. Forgive me for my greed of always wanting newer, bigger, and better things. Forgive me for not doing my part to change the unjust systems that keep you suffering and impoverished. I offer you my promise to become more aware of your situation and to change my lifestyle as I work for the transformation of our world.

Taken from *Out of the Ordinary* © 2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved.

Keeping the Dream

The American hip-hop composer and singer Tupac Shakur had a short and difficult life that led him to prison and eventual death in a drive-by shooting at the age of 25. Here are the lyrics of one of his songs:

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk without feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.*

According to this urban poet, roses may grow in the midst of violence, injustice, loneliness, loss or desperation.

Pause/silence

Let us pray together:

*God of peace and justice,
You give us the capacity to change,
to bring about a world that mirrors your wisdom.*

*Create in us a desire to act in solidarity,
so that the pillars of injustice crumble
and those now crushed are set free.*

Amen



Mind Sweeping

Mark 6:31-32 “And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. 32 so they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.”

Quite often life asks and requires us to be busy and always on the move. The tasks of our daily lives can include studying, traveling from place to place, class to class, meeting friends, rushing to make deadlines and running errands for ourselves and others. As necessary and purposeful these tasks may be, we can in the process neglect simple tasks needed to survive such as eating, sufficient sleep, relaxation, and self-renewal.

Find a piece of paper, divide this in half and find a quiet ‘deserted place’ to rest a while,

just as Jesus had asked the Apostles to do. If you are short on room, create enough space around you to think, have privacy and be comfortable.

Once you have rested the body it is time to find rest, peace and ‘food’ for the mind.

Open your mind to each and every thought that makes itself known, begin to write all these thoughts either in short hand, keywords or small drawings/symbols on blank piece of paper that you have divided in two.

On one section of the paper write all your worries, concerns, random and passing thoughts of not much significance. Concerns you may not be able to control such as rainy weather tomorrow, traffic on the way home, something that happened today or your bus arriving on time.

In the other section write those thoughts that arise that are important to you. You will know when you hear them that they are important to your health, your journey in life, peace of mind and overall wellbeing.

They could be concerns for a loved one, making a deadline for a bill or an important assignment, calling an old friend, finding time to eat, play sports and exercise.

By taking the time to acknowledge, separate and organise our free thoughts we are sweeping our mind preparing a space for calm relaxation.

Cut down the middle of the two sections so as to separate them into two pieces of paper. With the important points; gently fold these and place into your pocket to be concerned at and addressed at another time.

With the lesser of important mind chatter thoughts left over; squeeze the paper into a ball or tear into pieces and recycle it to be reused into something useful and renewable. Do not hold onto that which clouds your mind or is beyond your control.

You are now in your deserted place. You have traveled the journey necessary to take the time to feed the body with rest, clear the mind of noise and have created a clear goal to revisit the important issues after stopping for a period of rest.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Do you ever feel you need a boat to be free and travel to a deserted place?

Can you see in those around you when they may need to make this trip?

The disciples then, after reflection, went on to feed thousands of hungry men with what small resources they had.

How can we make sure that we find the time to rest so that we too can give adequately to those around us who ask for our help?



Walk On

Lyrics by Bono and music by U2

And if the darkness is to keep us apart
And if the daylight feels like it's a long way off
And if your glass heart should crack
And for a second you turn back
Oh no, be strong

Walk on, walk on
What you got, they can't steal it
No they can't even feel it
Walk on, walk on
Stay safe tonight...

You're packing a suitcase for a place none of
us has been
A place that has to be believed to be seen
You could have flown away
A singing bird in an open cage
Who will only fly, only fly for freedom

Walk on, walk on
What you got they can't deny it
Can't sell it or buy it
Walk on, walk on
Stay safe tonight

And I know it aches
And your heart it breaks
And you can only take so much
Walk on, walk on

Home...hard to know what it is if you never had
one
Home...I can't say where it is but I know I'm
going home
That's where the heart is

I know it aches
How your heart it breaks
And you can only take so much
Walk on, walk on

Leave it behind
You've got to leave it behind
All that you fashion
All that you make
All that you build
All that you break
All that you measure
All that you steal
All this you can leave behind
All that you reason
All that you sense
All that you speak
All you dress up
All that you scheme...

Bono from U2 wrote this song after watching the 2005 movie 'Beyond Rangoon' which is based on the life of Aung San Suu Kyi. Aung San Suu Kyi is a Burmese peace activist. In 1990, the military junta called a general election, which the National League for Democracy won by an overwhelming 82% of the votes. Being the NLD's candidate, Aung San Suu Kyi under normal circumstances would have assumed the office of Prime Minister. Instead, the results were nullified, and the military refused to hand over power. This resulted in an international outcry. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest at her home and has been imprisoned for 14 of the last 20 years. In 1991 she received the Nobel Peace Prize for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.

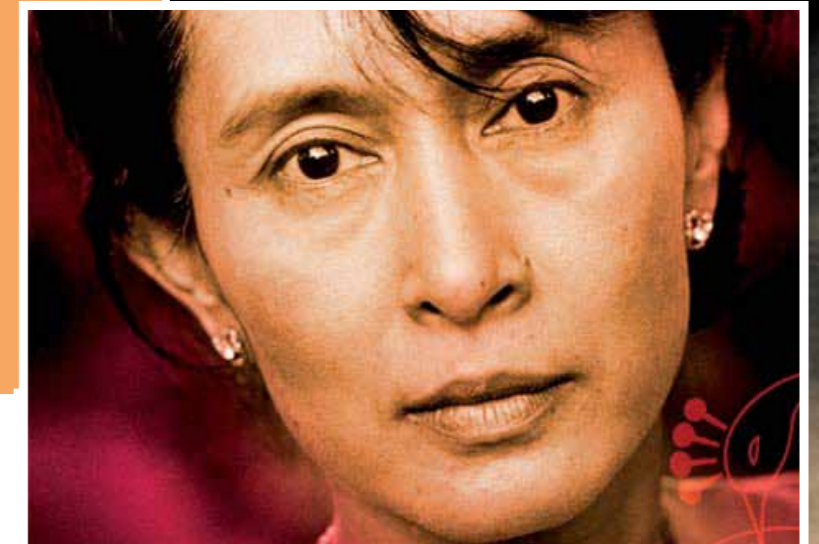
REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What is the song referring to when it says 'what you got they can't feel/steal/deny/buy it'?

What does 'home' mean for you? Does your faith play a part in that? Why/Why not?

Do you feel strongly enough about something that you would risk being separated from the people you love to stand up for it?

Should religious institutions or spokespeople get involved in political issues, such as the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi?



Inspiration from Society Founders

Read the following quotes and reflect on them using the questions provided.

If we are really called to carry the love of God far and wide, if we are to inflame the nations with this fire, if we have the vocation of setting the whole world on fire, if it is so, then how much I must myself burn with this fire"

St Vincent de Paul

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What makes you want to set the whole world on fire?

What issues are you really passionate about?

Where do you get your energy to try and change the world?

"Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor

BI Rosalie Rendu

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Is love and compassion more important than physical assistance? Why / Why not?

Can we help those who need assistance if we don't respect and love them?

What difference does it make?

Christianity is not about ideas but about deeds inspired by love

BI Frederic Ozanam

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What are the 'deeds' or works that you do to live out your Christian faith?

How does your faith provide a foundation for the work you do?

Are 'deeds' equally valuable when they are not inspired by love?

Are 'deeds' still Christian if they are not inspired by love?

Mad World



The Vinnies vision statement says that we assist those in need "by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope".

One of the key ways we do this is by offering the hand of friendship. The hand of friendship can be offered quite simply for example the hand of friendship is offered with the cup of coffee given Night Patrol, or with the garden weeding on Green Team. The hand of friendship can provide someone who is struggling with a renewed perspective on their dignity. While the hand of friendship is by not means an instant fix it plants seeds of hope.

As Blessed Mother Teresa once said:

We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Take some time to think about people you work with in your Vinnies work. Try to put yourselves in their head for a few minutes. How do they see the world?

Through your Vinnies work you are already contributing to the alleviation of poverty. Think about the aspects of your Vinnies work the really challenge you. Ask God to assist you in these areas that you find difficult. Pray that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit and that it may be the Spirit acting through you when you most struggle.

All around me are familiar faces
Worn out places, worn out faces
Bright and early for their daily races
Goin' nowhere, goin' nowhere
Their tears are fillin' up their glasses
No expression, no expression
Hide my head I want to drown my sorrow
No tomorrow, no tomorrow

And I find it kind of funny
I find it kind of sad
The dreams in which I'm dyin'
Are the best I've ever had
I find it hard to tell you
'Cause I find it hard to take
When people run in circles
It's a very, very
Mad world, mad world
Mad world, mad world

Written by Roland Orzabal from Tears for Fears

The lyrics from the above song paint the picture of a sad, depressing and somewhat broken world. This is the world that many of the people who we serve through our Vinnies work experience every day. For some of them they have lost what used to add spark to their life and give them purpose.

Meditation and Prayer

Find a comfortable position in your chair. If you wish to, loosen any restrictive clothing, if it would make you completely at ease, take off your shoes.

Close your eyes and in your imagination go to a place where you are completely at peace. *(Pause)*

It may be a corner in your home. *(Pause)*

A place by the sea, *(Pause)*

Or a rain forest *(Pause)* *(Start playing music)*

Slowly breathe in and then slowly breathe out *(Pause)*

As you breathe out, breathe out all your tensions.

Slowly breathe in *(Pause)*

Breathe in all the goodness and beauty of your place of relaxation, and those around you *(Pause)*

Breathe out your tensions and hand them over to your God in prayer *(Pause)*

Acknowledge what has brought you to this weekend

Receiving the energy of this morning/evening, this group, the goodwill and love of those who support you,

Can you now become aware of your body, as it is this morning/evening...

Are you feeling tired, weary....

Where is this tiredness coming from?

Acknowledge the many functions and systems of your body...

the wonder of your heart...your digestive system...your hands...the feet which brought you here.

Acknowledge your feelings...you have experienced many since this morning. Your feelings are your friends as they indicate to you what is happening in your life.

Call to mind the memories of the past few weeks. Some memories will be good; others will be not so good.

Acknowledge and breathe in all the goodness of the Society throughout the world, especially in countries where the members are working under oppressive conditions.

Breathe in all the goodness that is being done in this community.

The Special Works for the needy and marginalised.

Breathe out any tensions that you may be experiencing and hand these tensions over to Jesus in prayer.

The work you do is good work, so allow God to direct you in this work.

Listen to God speak to you in the depths of your being.

Prayer
St. John's Gospel, Ch. 16

*I am the true vine
and my Father the vine dresser
Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he cuts away*



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What in me needs to be cut away?
What is my Vincentian work that needs to be pruned?
What in Vincentian work needs to be nurtured?

Every branch that does not bear fruit, he prunes to make it bear even more fruit.

What pruning do I need to do in my life? In my Vincentian work?
What do I need to nurture in my life, so my relationship grows with my God?

Make your home in me, as I make my home in you.

What do I need to do to make my home in Jesus' home?

If you remain in me and my branch remains in you, you may ask what you will and receive it. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love.

For the next few moments mull over in prayer what you would like to write on your branch...your goal for your Vincentian work.

Also, mull over what has brought you to this meeting/gathering. What do you hope to get out of it?

When you are ready, leave your place of peace and gently come back into this room. Perhaps, have a stretch.

Social Inclusion 2010: Inclusion or Exclusion?

Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice's role to prevent the attack.

At just nineteen years of age, our [SVDP] founder Frederic Ozanam, was already engaging in a dialogue of social justice and fundamental human rights. More recently, our National CEO John Falzon, has taken up Frederic's great intentions and continued on a regular basis to ask the question, 'Are you ready to join the call for social justice?'. As an active participant in the National Human Rights Consultation Hearings in July this year, John Falzon made a very interesting case for inclusion for all Australians:

I am speaking about the story of social inclusion on Aboriginal land. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. I acknowledge that we are talking about inclusion in the midst of a very strong story of marginalisation and dispossession.

I come from an organisation that stands with the people who have been pushed to the margins of Australian society. And made to feel that they deserve to be pushed to these margins. Our 40,000 members stand with those who are effectively made to wait outside. I come from a movement that everyday sees the Australian face of poverty and inequality. A society such as ours however, wondrous as it is in its freedoms and prosperities for some, is structured around the alienation of many. As a limited set of exceptions this would be bad enough. As a status quo it is unconscionable. Inequality was flaunted as a virtue in the bloody wake of colonisation and the ongoing dispossession of the First Peoples of this country. It continues to be flaunted even as (thankfully, hopefully) this nation struggles to move forward, away from the false notions of deserving and undeserving poor, steering a path between condemnation and pity.

Social inclusion cannot come from above. I put it to you that the people who are most disempowered in our society are the ones who know the truth of their own exclusion better than anyone and that the truth they, and those who take their side, speak must be spoken to each other. This is inclusion where the people are in control rather than being viewed as the mere objects of inclusion. It is said that truth must be spoken to power. When you think about it this way, sharing the truth with each other is the truth being spoken to power. We reject the notion that marginalised people should continue to be blamed for their own marginalisation. The time has come for this

form of demonisation to be effectively removed from the public discourse.

The greatest power for progressive social change lies precisely with the people who have been pushed to the margins. As John McKnight explains, 'Revolutions begin when people who are defined as problems achieve the power to redefine the problem'.

All quotation above, from John Falzon, SVDP National CEO and was drawn from: *The human face of those who miss out: Presentation to the NHRC Public Hearing 2009 and Free at last? The story of social inclusion: Opening address to the UnitingCare Strategic Planning Conference 2009*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

At what point in Australia's history will we holistically redress the social imbalances that perpetuate social exclusion; and actively promote inclusion?

If 'charity is no substitute for justice', then what is? How do we move away from welfare designed assistance models, and into long-term advocacy based solutions?

What are you doing personally, to actively promote social inclusion in your community/s?

Are our current "solutions" promoting inclusion or exclusion for all Australians?





St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

PEACE OUT

A Collection of Spiritual Reflections for Young People

Every day the St Vincent de Paul Society helps many thousands of people through home visitation, migrant and refugee assistance, hospital visitation, prison visitation, retail centres, sheltered workcentres, hostels for homeless men, women and children, overseas relief, disaster recovery, budget counselling and youth programs.

WWW.VINNIES.ORG.AU