



## Background Material for Pulpit Pitches

Thank you Father for giving us the opportunity to provide information to help our Parishioners better understand the work of St. Vincent de Paul.

There are over 300 references to “the poor” in the Bible. It is clear beyond any interpretation that all Christians are called to do what we can to help people who are struggling for whatever reason.

And therein lies the core of our mission at St. Vincent de Paul. Our work comes from our deep faith and belief that we are here to serve and to help and to love God.

Our mission says:

“Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic volunteer organization, leads individuals to join together to offer person-to-person service to the poor and the suffering. And in doing this work, we all enrich our lives spiritually.”

Some of us sitting here today probably know very little about what it is like to be poor. And some of us may know the feeling quite well.

While the idea of being poor may seem distant to many of us, it really shouldn't. Here is a sobering number to think about. Almost 100 million American people, one out of every three of us, are either poor or very close to being poor.

Poor people struggle on a daily basis for things many of us take for granted, e.g., a warm bed, food on the table, a job, and a steady income. The near poor generally live paycheck to paycheck, scraping by and hoping and praying that things get better.

Remember this: like all of us, the people we are serving have God given gifts and potential within them. Our calling, which comes directly from Christ, is to serve them, love them, and help them help themselves.

In Luke 3:11, Jesus says: "Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."

It may seem hard to believe, but \$5 or \$20 or a bag of clothing or gently used household goods can make a major difference in someone's life. Think about becoming a "life change agent" to help people survive in this economy.

You can donate money to St. Vincent de Paul and you can also donate clothes and household items. These gifts can help a family pay for a week of rent or a few days of keeping their power and heat on. Similarly, a gift of \$100 may provide rent or utility help for a month.

An anonymous person we had helped several months ago sent a handwritten note simply addressed to St. Vincent de Paul saying "thank you and the volunteers that assisted me. I am grateful and blessed because of your help."

A senior manager of an agency that helps low income people in Seattle says we get very high praise from many people who need help because "St. Vincent de Paul treats people with dignity." That really shouldn't be so hard to do, should it?

For us, it is part of our faith journey and our understanding of what Christ asks us to do to love others as we would love ourselves.

We must keep believing in humanity and doing what is right. We can't and shouldn't give up on people. In fact, we should be doing just the opposite. We should be talking about helping one another. We should be encouraging dialog and understanding. We should be listening more carefully than we ever have.

Let me close this powerful reference in Matthew 19:21: Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect,\* go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

The message from St. Vincent de Paul today is really very simple: help the needy. It's not hard to understand; and we hope and pray that it is not hard to do.

Thank You.

### **Clean Your Closets Pulpit Announcement/Virginia Roni**

Good evening or good morning.

My husband, Joe, & I for a number of years have been members of the St. Vincent de Paul society here at St. Theresa's. It has been our privilege to participate in this ministry of service to the poor in our surrounding community who may need help.

Before telling you about a new program to accept donations of clothing & shoe donations to the St. Vincent de Paul thrift stores that we will be inaugurating, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge how good you, the parishioners, have been and continue to be to our local St. Vincent de Paul society.

During the last 12 month period, St. Theresa's society has been able to prevent more than 1000 individuals from becoming homeless. Yes, you

heard correctly....not 25, not 100, but more than a thousand women, men, & children. And how was this possible?

It was your financial contributions to the St. Vincent de Paul society, leveraged with outside grant monies, that allowed us to pay on behalf of those in need their rent or utility bills, avoiding impending evictions and utility shut-offs, and kept more than 1000 individuals safe and secure in their homes.

None of this would have been possible without your constant financial support. They say behind every successful man there is a great woman.....but I believe that behind every successful society, there are great people. You, the parishioners of St. Theresa's, are those great people. You are truly a blessing to the poor who live amongst us.

This evening (or morning) I am here not to ask for money but to tell you about a new bi-monthly program (every other month on the second weekend) sponsored by the St. Vincent de Paul society that won't cost you a penny.

It is called "clean your closets Sunday" and its intent is to make it easier for you to donate clean, wearable clothing & shoes for re-sale at the St. Vincent thrift stores. No longer will there be a need for you to wait for a St. Vincent de Paul truck to show up twice a year in our church parking lot.

The kick off date for the first clean your closet Sunday is the weekend of November 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. You can simply bring donations of clothing & shoes with you to any of the weekend masses. Parents with children and youth in the faith formation classes, and also other volunteers, will be available before mass to receive your donations and put them into the clearly marked St. Vincent de Paul boxes in the church narthex. Of course, do feel free to place the donations into the waiting receptacles yourself.

All of these donations will be distributed for re-sale at our SVdP thrift stores. Not surprisingly, the current economy has caused many more

households to use our stores for purchases other than food. This results in an increased need of donations available for purchase by those in need.

We would also like you to know that all of the profits generated by the SVdP thrift stores are available to any local parish society that may lack sufficient funds from time to time to assist the poor in their own community. St. Theresa's SVdP society has received a share of some of these profits in the past!

It is our hope that the clean your closet Sunday that begins the weekend of Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> will make it easier for each of you to donate clothing to the poor. The second clean your closet Sunday will be in January and we will remind you one week ahead.

There will also be a flyer in next week's church bulletin with complete details about the program. Once again, on behalf of those we serve, we thank you for your continued support of the SVdP society.

### **Pulpit Pitch Stephanie Ragland**

Today's readings are both affirming and a clear challenge. They not only put our own baptisms in perspective, they clearly and profoundly compel us to respond to the Gospel call of service.

I did not realize-- that when my parents brought me to St. Andrew's parish in Oakland, California on June 10, 1956 to be baptized—what they were getting me into.

Tomorrow morning, parents will bring their infants to this altar asking for baptism, and those dear little ones will not realize today what will be asked of them as they grow as new Catholic Christians. It will hopefully become clearer as they are nurtured and mentored in their faith here at Our Lady of the Lake.

Their being immersed in the waters of baptism—will give them a new life in Christ; give them a new language, a new demeanor and quite frankly a new road map as they navigate and live in God’s kingdom. We have been on that road for awhile now; some of us longer than us others. And we have in some fashion and form navigated with new language and attitudes.

If you remember, at another time, we have heard our first reading proclaimed in Luke’s gospel. It’s a wonderful scene where Jesus has returned to Nazareth and goes to the temple and unrolls the scroll and reads this passage. When Jesus is finished he say’s—and this reading is being fulfilled in your listening.

And so it is today, these readings are being fulfilled as we listen. This parish has a rich history of bringing justice, healing, and service—not only to the Wedgewood community, but to the city as a whole. You are God’s servants here on earth; you are the face and hands and heart of Jesus for the people whom you serve in so many ways.

--Pause--

So many ways you are the face of Jesus for the suffering and the deprived. Over 350 year ago a priest in France heard the call of Jesus to be his hands and face and heart for the poor. His name was St. Vincent de Paul and I can tell you that when he was first ordained he was pretty set on a life of professional and financial security. Being a priest back then had some great perks if you found the right benefactor.

Then, as it always seems to happen—and it happens--God called him, in a very profound way and he forced to really listen. And so began the creation of not only one but two religious orders whose mission was to serve the poor in the world. For Vincent the way to God was through the poor—with each encounter you saw the face of Jesus—a galley slave, an abandoned baby, the widow, the sick poor.

Two hundred years after St. Vincent died; a twenty year old member of the aristocratic class of Paris, University student named Frederic Ozanam—responded to his baptismal call to be the face of Jesus to the poor and disenfranchised in the slums of Paris—this was in stark contrast to the social norms of the time. But he wanted to prove that Catholics did live out their faith, that Catholics did put their faith into action.

Frederic created a group of young people who made it their mission to visit the poor in their homes, listening and responding to both their spiritual and physical needs. Groceries were distributed, fuel for the woodstove was provided, and time was given for simply visiting and listening to those who were lonely. Most of all these small groups of Catholic young people became the FACE OF CHRIST TO THE POOR. They called themselves the ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY— naming themselves after St. Vincent de Paul who would become their patron.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is I think a hidden ministry though it lives in 142 countries worldwide and has been around 179 years.

Here in Seattle, we've been around since 1920—and possibly more noted for its thrift stores than where it's true heart lies.

The St. Vincent de Paul society is neighborhood based in parishes around the city. Small groups of volunteers receive referrals of people who are in need of eviction prevention, utility shut offs, food, transpiration, clothing—just a variety of needs. These volunteers then make a home visit—in pairs—remember Jesus sent out his disciples 2X2—they listen and determine how they can best assist each case.

And this home visit is one of the cornerstones of the St. Vinnies ministry. The Vincentians, as we are called, go to the person in need. They do not come to us. We engage them in their own home; we sit with them and

listen to their needs—and we for a moment -- are the face –and—hands— and-- ears of Jesus. The incarnation is lived with each visit the Vincentian volunteers make—face to face, eye to eye ear, heart to heart.

The other cornerstone of the Vincent de Paul Society is personal spiritual growth. And by that I mean we are a group that is nurtured through our faith and our commitment to grow more deeply in our relationship to God—and we do this uniquely not only with the personal encounters but our commitment to reflect on our spiritual journey as Vincentians.

Here at Our Lady of the Lake, the SVDP has been active for many years. I am sure you notice the envelopes in the pew that ask for money and that money of course goes to help with the rent and light bills of those most needy here in the area. The school children have been engaged in food drives for us and just last year Mrs. Feeney’s kindergarten class learned about the founder of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

There is a very small but mighty group here at Our Lady of the Lake who has been dedicated for a number of years making those home visits and assisting in ways that are needed to offer the very basics.

But that group is aging and they are getting tired. New blood is needed— new faces, new hands, and new hearts to respond and live out the first reading we heard today.

So, we are looking for a few good men and women—who might consider being apart of this ministry to the poor. For organization sake, the group meets once a month to do a little business and some spiritual reflection, but the home visits are done on your schedule—weekday, evening, or weekend.



So if you are a stay at home mom or dad, have a full time job outside the home, or retired — we have a place for you.

I will be after mass to answer more questions and to take your name for a follow up meeting to answer more basic questions. There will be an orientation here at \_\_\_\_\_.

St. Vincent de Paul use to say that “love was inventive to infinity” — may the love of God, which is beyond all knowing grow in each of you to infinity —

**From Henry Rutkowski (Formerly at St. Luke Conference)  
Recruitment Pulpit Pitch**

You can all relax; I haven't come to ask you for money. It's much worse; I've come to ask for you.

I'm asking you to consider becoming a member of the St. Luke Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic lay organization, whose main propose is the spiritual growth of its members. The avenue we take to advance this spiritual growth is a ministry to the poor.

The St. Luke Conference is one of about 54 parish conferences that make up the Seattle /King County Council of the Society. Each day, Monday through Friday, one of our members, we call them Vincentians, is assigned the responsibility for all the calls that come in to us from the downtown Call Center.

St. Luke is responsible for all requests that come from Shoreline, West of I-5. Under our current schedule, each Vincentian is on duty about once every 2.5 weeks. After the member receives a request, they contact the client by phone, get whatever additional information is needed and then schedules a home visit with the client.

Then the Vincentian contacts another member to go on the visit. We always visit in pairs. During the visit, we try to get to know the client at a deeper level and really understand their situation so that we can provide better help.

The material assistance we give is mostly: food from our food locker, vouchers for food at supermarkets, vouchers to the SVDP stores for clothing and housewares, bus tickets, and financial assistance for rent and utilities.

We have general rules for the amount and frequency of aid we give, however, the Vincentian on the case has discretion to do what is best for the client. We do violate our own rules from time to time and on occasion give assistance that we normally don't give.

A very important rule of the Society is that "No act of charity is foreign to the Society."

About every two weeks our Conference meets and each member, who was on duty since the last meeting, reports on the calls they have made and how they were handled. In that way we are accountable to each other and we can discuss special cases.

Finally, each new member is required to complete a training class. This class is usually one all day session on a Saturday at one of the parishes in

the Archdiocese. It is given by representatives of the Seattle/ King County Council.

So much for the machinery of what we do. What can you expect if you come to work with us?

First, the poor will no longer be an abstraction. They will be a set of faces and life experiences that you know personally.

Second, you will find that glib and superficial responses, such as "they should pull themselves up by their own bootstraps" won't cut it. Third, you can't do this work without God. It must be God working through you.

I want to end with some words from a Franciscan who conducted a parish mission here at St. Luke's a few years ago. He is from Philadelphia and runs a soup kitchen there.

After one of the evening sessions, I told him I was a Vincentian, but that I was frustrated because in many cases, we can only give little compared to the need and we usually can't fix the problem.

His answer to me was: "We are all poor, but from time to time some of us can give something to another." We are all poor because we only have the use of stuff. The ownership belongs to God.

If you think you can work under these conditions, if you think, God is asking you to do this, or if you think you need to do this for your own spiritual growth, we want to talk to you.

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God Bless you all.