

The Land

I Came From...

Go on a spiritual pilgrimage where you can see the birthplace of the father of the poor, the apostle of Charity, a genius and a saint. You are right: he is St. Vincent de Paul, whom you greet on entering the alley, who is watching over his "family": you, us...



At the cradle of St. Vincent, located in the South-West of France, near Dax, a majestic oak is to be seen. Its roots and branches are a symbol.



It is the image of the fecundity that God gives to the person who gives himself entirely to God.

"Nothing pleases me except in Jesus Christ."

September 2003



The
Chapel
Pamphlets

English

Priests of The Mission

Vincentians

and the Chapel

with



Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
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Child, Vincent knelt down to pray at foot of the Holy Virgin's statue which he had placed in the hallowed trunk of an oak tree. Priest, he wanted to celebrate his first mass in a small solitary chapel dedicated to Our Lady at Buzet. Subsequently, he put all his works under the patronage of Mary Immaculate. We often forget that a big rosary is hung from his belt and never left his side. At the sound of the Angelus, he stopped whatever he was doing. He fasted openly on the eve of all Marian feasts and concluded all his spiritual conferences by a prayer to Our Lady.

We then understand the Marian devotion of the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, who have been chosen by God to spread throughout the world the message of the Immaculate Conception of Mary carried on the Medal and asked for by the Blessed Virgin Herself in the Chapel of the rue du Bac.

Anyway, it was St. Vincent who had inspired Catherine Labouré in her vocation as a Daughter of Charity. **The Saints are always active in Heaven!** In 1830, having seen the heart of St. Vincent, Catherine received the immense favour of seeing the Blessed Virgin on the eve of the Feast of Saint Vincent. She had prayed a lot for this! Like St. Vincent, whom she admired so much she consecrated her life to the service of the poor.

Her confessor, Father Aladel, Vincentian, had the medal made. The first 2,000 medals were distributed in 1832 in Paris when a terrible epidemic of cholera killed 20,000 Parisians. There were many cures, protections and conversions. It was a tidal wave. The people of Paris called the Medal "miraculous".

The Virgin Mary and St. Vincent

...which continues throughout the world today!
The great day was the feast of conversion of St. Paul, the 25th of January, 1617. To mark this special day, we Vincentians celebrate the 25th of January every year.

Vincent was 36 years old and had been a priest since the age of 20. He had not yet reached his full potential but was searching hard a better way to serve God. Suddenly, at the bedside of a dying man, he discovered the spirit of misery, the ravages of sin, the urgency of evangelisation, and especially, the greatness of the sacrament of penitence, confession... we talk about the sacrament of reconciliation.

Our Chapel is a privileged place to become reconciled with God and this is not by hazard.

In 1625, St. Vincent founded the **Congrégation de la Mission** (hence the initials added to the name of Vincentians: c.m.). This gave birth to a small company of priests and brothers who then set out to evangelise the country districts. Today, it is our cities that need evangelising!

Soon after, the Vincentians also dedicated themselves to the formation of priests. "There is nothing greater than that of a priest to whom God has given power over his natural body and the power of forgiving sins..."

Nevertheless, what holiness is demanded, in order to be coherent with oneself and to lead by Example! Exigency, but not monopoly! All of us are "of the religion of St. Peter". As St. Vincent said, we are all called to be saints: **and to be united to God throughout our lives!**

All In The History...

Serve With The Daughters of Charity

St. Vincent always speaks with a realism full of humour? "Jesus directed a company of women!" he said. He alluded to the women who had surrounded Jesus in his public life. They serve Him, they love Him, they are faithful to Him till the end. Is it not a woman who first witnessed the resurrection of Christ? We shall also name His Mother, who is blessed among all women?

St. Vincent had given a rule of life to the Priests of the Mission: **Imitate Jesus-Christ**.

Also "what a blessing from God to do what the Son of God did, to direct (spiritually) women like he did, who serve God and the people as well as they can.

Our responsibility, as Vincentians, is to insert ourselves into a history and to re-appropriate a mission: to serve the Chapel hand in hand with the Daughters of Charity.

Vincent himself had received many women from his surroundings: his mother, his sisters, Queen Marguerite de Navarre, Madame de Gondi, Louise de Marillac, intelligent women, kind-hearted women, mystics, Marguerite Naseau, first Daughter of Charity, and of course the Ladies of Charity. In fact, St. Vincent gave an important role to women both in the Church and society, and confided to them the service of the poor, not only corporally but also spiritually, hence catechesis and religious instruction.

Pray With Many people

Here, a pilgrim takes his own path. He discovers the Chapel at his rhythm, according to his inspiration. He stops here or there. He approaches the altar at one statute and then the other. He participates in the Chapel's prayer of the Rosary. He can also benefit from the formation being proposed to to him.

St Vincent said: "It is important that people also see us as men of prayer. What a blessing if they see us praying with them". He recommended that his priests celebrate the **Eucharist** with dignity, with the same dispositions of Jesus Himself. He also had a great esteem for the baptismal priesthood of all the Christians, who have to offer their lives – at the eucharistic sacrifice. Each of us can unite our daily life to the offering of God by paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

In fact, St. Vincent has united both worship and mission.

For me the Eucharist is the most striking. It is a wonder to see people receiving the Body of Christ with profound respect and the forgiveness of God during the sacrament of reconciliation.

Priests At The Service of The Public

For the Vincentians, St. Vincent is their example!

For Him, a priest is fully consecrated to God, at the service of the public. It is a path of both service and faith.

We have 3,500 Vincentians throughout the world, about 150 are in France. We call ourselves Priests of the Mission or just Vincentians, having lived in a big priory called Saint-Lazare near Gare de L'Est in Paris. It was destined to receive lepers. We lead a fraternal life **in community**. Our General Superior lives in Rome. He is also superior of the Daughters of Charity. In Paris, you know our mother house very well because it is at the Chapel of Saint-Vincent-de Paul * where numerous pilgrims visit.

At the Chapel, we hear both the sufferings and wounds of people. We also hear their hopes and their thanks. The celebrations on Tuesdays are to honour and to respect these intentions which have been dropped in or sent by internet to the Chapel.

The charism of St. Vincent is still alive!

A Spiritual Missionary

Though St. Vincent did not write any books, we can glean from his conferences, letters and actions.

He gave five virtues to the Vincentians to imitate, in order to remain close to others. These missionary virtues are: simplicity, humanity, gentleness, mortification, and the zeal to give all of oneself. Our vocation is to go to every part of the earth, said St. Vincent, and do what?

To enflame the hearts of men.

Do not forget that St. Vincent proposes this spiritual missionary to all Christians, priests and to the laity.

I love our slogan: "He has sent me to evangelise the poor". In the missions, we are going out to reach people. Here, it is the reverse! It is the people who come to us. In the Chapel, we, priests, are at the heart of an assemble. Instead of going out to the entire world, the entire world comes to us.

Bernard Schoepfer c.m.