

**Homily Outline for the Mass for the  
Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention  
Saint Agnes Church  
Springfield, Illinois**

**Mass for Wednesday of the 25<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time (Y1)  
Memorial of Saint Vincent De Paul  
September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 AD**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

- I. It is good to be with you for this Mass for the Springfield Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention.
  
- II. Pope Francis: 2019 Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (“Christ Lives”), written in response to the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, on young people, faith and vocational discernment.
  - A. What can the Church teach the young?
  
  - B. What can the young teach the Church?
  
  - C. The answer to both questions is hope.
    1. The virtue of hope is not naïve optimism or acting like a Pollyanna who pretends that all is sweetness and light, but trust in God that all will turn out well in the end.
  
    2. “Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1817).
  
- III. In our first reading today, the prophet Ezra laments the people’s great sin, symbolized by intermarrying non-Israelites. Rising at a public service, he tears his clothing as a sign of grief. Falling on his knees, he confesses sin and invokes the mercy of God. The exile was caused by sins of the people. Ezra acknowledges that their guilt continues even now as God has given the people a second chance at relief from their servitude. Indeed, God has even turned the goodwill of the Persian kings toward them, giving them new life to rebuild and restore from ruins not only the temple, but also all of Judah and Jerusalem.

- A. Ezra's prophetic charge against his own people is ironic. Intermarriage is a grave sin because it weakens the identity of the people as belonging to God by covenant. Their "second chance" in rebuilding and restoring the temple has given them a "fence" in Judah and Jerusalem against hostile foreign powers. Intermarriage weakens that fence and risks repeating the sin that caused the exile in the first place. The people seem to have learned nothing from their captivity and all its suffering.
  - B. The 50-year exile had many debilitating consequences, including servitude, ruin, and disgrace. Although the former exiles are only a remnant, they now have a stake in God's holy place. The benign will of the Persian Empire that gave them new life represents God's gracious work. Like Moses, Ezra urges the people to remember God's mercy and remain faithful.
- IV. Memorial of Saint Vincent De Paul
- A. I am a graduate of DePaul College of Law.
  - B. Today the Catholic Church remembers Saint Vincent de Paul, the French, 17th century priest known as the patron of Catholic charities for his apostolic work among the poor and marginalized.
  - C. Vincent established the Congregation of the Mission in 1625, as part of an effort to evangelize rural populations and foster vocations to remedy a priest shortage. Not long after this, he worked with the future Saint Louise de Marillac to organize the Daughters of Charity, the first congregation of women religious whose consecrated life involved an extensive apostolate among the poor, the sick, and prisoners.
  - D. St. Vincent de Paul died on Sept. 27, 1660, only months after the death of St. Louise de Marillac in March of the same year. Pope Clement XII canonized him in 1737. In 1835, the French scholar Blessed Frederic Ozanam took him as the inspiration and namesake for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a lay Catholic organization working for the relief of the poor.
  - E. From a writing by Saint Vincent de Paul, priest (Epist. 2546: *Correspondance, entretiens*, documents, Paris 1922-1925, 7):
  - F. Serving the poor is to be our first preference.

- G. "Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined, we must not judge them from external appearances nor from the mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor."
- H. "Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself. Since God surely loves the poor, he also loves those who love the poor. For when one person holds another dear, he also includes in his affection anyone who loves or serves the one he loves. That is why we hope that God will love us for the sake of the poor. So when we visit the poor and needy, we try to understand the poor and weak. We sympathize with them so fully that we can echo Paul's words: I have become all things to all men. Therefore, we must try to be stirred by our neighbors' worries and distress. We must beg God to pour into our hearts sentiments of pity and compassion and to fill them again and again with these dispositions."

May God give us this grace. Amen.