



**St Vincent de Paul Society
Mass of Thanksgiving**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxtton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Friday 27 September 2019

The inspiring thing about the liturgy of the Mass is the way in which the Word of God is presented to us.

In a way it starts a sort of resonance within us if we listen well.

There have been stories over the years, over the centuries, of saints who have happened to hear a particular Gospel and it has formed a path of discipleship for them for the rest of their lives.

One or two of them heard the Gospel, it happened to be on that particular day that they entered the church, and they heard the Gospel, "Go and sell everything, give to the poor and follow me."

They took that challenge up and that became, that beautiful path that they followed, became the way that they learned who Christ was. And they developed a tremendous love for their Lord because of the experiences that came their way, because they chose to follow that particular path.

A man in Madrid back in the 1960's, perhaps even a bit earlier than that, had himself gone through a conversion experience: because he had gone to university and practically lost his faith.

And it was through encountering a group of Christians who were following the Cursillo Movement, that he came to hear this word that was to transform his life.

The word came through the preaching and the example of the life of Charles de Foucault, where Charles said, "If you want to find Christ, go and live amongst the poor".

And this was a word that really inspired this man to leave a very comfortable lifestyle and a very promising career, to go and live in the shanty town just outside of Madrid, and to go there with nothing more than a Bible and a guitar.

And the thing that happened after that was just extraordinary.

He lived with the people, the very poorest of the people: the gypsies, the prostitutes, the murderers, the thieves.

And they started asking questions of themselves, "Why has this man come to live among us; what is his purpose; what is he trying to do?"



And little by little, they started to understand this man, some of them came and brought him blankets and bits of cardboard that he could use to build a little structure that he could live in.

And they were enticed because they could hear the songs that he was writing and that he was composing using the Psalms and some of the stories of the Gospels.

And they were drawn to him, because of the beauty of the music first of all, but also because of the words that they were hearing, and these words themselves were setting up a similar resonance in their hearts; as the words had set up a resonance in the heart of Kiko; as a resonance had been set up in the lives of the Saints that we celebrate in the year, including today; the saint we celebrate of course, St Vincent de Paul.

I'm sure the word of God has had an impact on us too, that there is something that has moved in our own hearts that has brought us to a point where we want to do something; we want to do something that will help those who are less fortunate, those who are very wounded in their lives, those who are very lonely.

And that has set us on a path that has led us to this society that you are members of and that you support so beautifully.

Tonight as we celebrate this Mass on the Feast of St Vincent de Paul, we are remembering a man who himself was able to mix with a whole range of people in society, and perhaps could have been tempted at times, to find a very comfortable life and be as fulfilled as he would have wanted to be in ministry to that set of people.

But instead, this word that called him to seek out the poor and respond in the best way that he could for them, was a word that continued to be alive in his heart and shape the path that he took.

I read at one time that we he and St Louise were planning the formation of a group of sisters, that we call the Daughters of Charity, he felt that it was important just to choose the women who had come from the countryside, from the small towns and the villages: women who were used to hard work; women who could commit themselves to the poor because they knew what poverty was; and they would have a natural sympathy and empathy for those people.

So that is how originally the Daughters of Charity began, from that rather unpromising group of people, they became in their part, tremendous examples of faith and great witnesses to the Gospel.

This evening we pray that each of us who would examine our hearts, would say, "well, there's still a lot more of that conversion required within myself."

We need to allow that spirit to speak to our hearts and identify those points of conversion that are required each day, each and every one of us needs to enter into that conversion heart.

But you are blessed in the work that you do because you are with those, who in a way, can show you Christ, can lead you to the person of Jesus.



So we ask that the Lord will continue to bless you, to keep you motivated and committed to this Society and its fundamental work.

You, in a way, are part of the great treasures of the Church: you are the ones who show what the Christian message and what the Gospels are really all about.

So we give thanks for you and for your response to the Word of God, and to the way in which you enable many, many people to be relieved of their situation and supported in their situation.

We ask the Lord to continue to bless you and therefore to enable these people to know the love of God that we preach.