

Readings: *1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 31; Psalm 111(112): 1 – 9; Matthew 10: 34 – 39.*

Vincent Depaul was born in 1581 into a peasant family in south-western France. He began to train for the priesthood when he was fourteen and was ordained priest when not yet twenty. After ordination he continued to study theology.

It is said by some that in July 1605 he was travelling in a ship which was attacked by pirates and spent two years as a slave in Tunisia. He converted his master to Christianity, and the two of them escaped by rowing a boat across the Mediterranean.

After a year in Rome he returned to France, where he began a double ministry – devoted to caring for the poor while at the same time having a ministry to the rich and powerful.

In 1617 he set up the first of a number of organizations devoted to the care of the needy – a group of women first known as *The Servants of the Poor*, and later as *Ladies of Charity*. He wrote a rule for them, based on his own spiritual insight of seeing Christ in the poor and serving them as the means of becoming holy.

In 1625 he founded a congregation of priests known as *Priests of the Mission*, who would live on a common fund, rather than on individual church incomes. In 1633 they were given the Paris church of Saint-Lazare – from which they gained the additional name 'Lazarist Fathers'. In the same year Vincent founded *The Sisters of Charity* – the first order for women not bound to live in an enclosed community, but free to care for the poor and the sick. Saint-Lazare soon became the centre for the training of priests for the diocese of Paris.

Appeals for help came from many quarters: Vincent responded to them with great enthusiasm. He persuaded the nobleman in charge of the galleys to build a hospice for galley-workers in Marseilles, sent missionaries to many countries, including Scotland, raised money through rich women, and established *Charities* in many French towns.

Vincent died in his 79th year: the bishop who preached at his funeral said that he had “changed the face of the Church”. Vincent was canonized in 1737. He is the patron saint of all charitable societies, including the lay confraternity called after him – *The Society of St Vincent de Paul* – through which his influence continues in many parishes

927 SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

(SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2021)

7

8

9

10