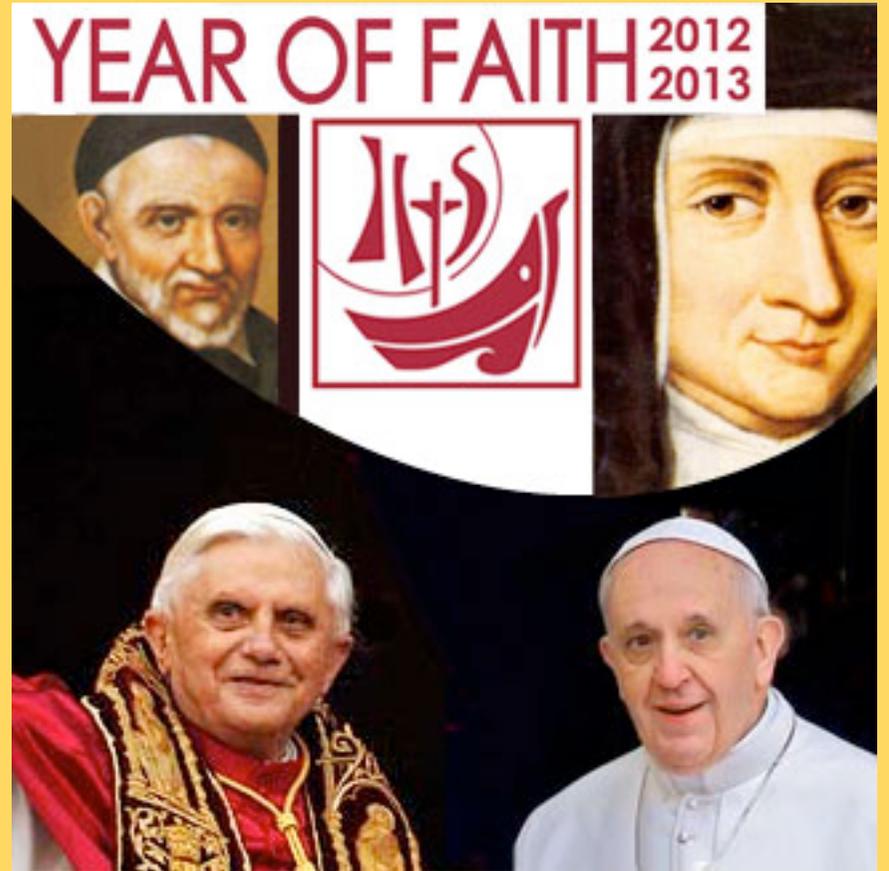


# A Vincentian Approach to Evangelization



Evangelization is directed toward the whole person: that is, toward the mind, the spirit, the heart and the body.



St. Vincent described the situation of ignorance as one in which many people were being damned. He spoke about evangelization in terms of “truths that are necessary for salvation.”





Vincent mistrusted lofty ideas and sentimental feelings... meaningless in identifying with the suffering and misery of the neighbor... pious words that are empty and thus, carried away by the wind. Faith, prayer, and divine grace are needed to keep us on track.

People often will not act until their hearts are touched. Every acceptance of the faith must include a human aspect: some form of service or commitment on behalf of the neighbor.





It was clear to Vincent de Paul (just as it is clear to us) that it is useless to tell people that they are children of God and that Christ died for them if those people are dying of hunger, if society continues to heap scorn upon them, and if dogs are treated better than people who are poor. The process of evangelization demands action as well as words.

In evangelization there is certainly a need to proclaim doctrine, but we can never be satisfied with caring for a person's intellectual needs only.

The apostle James challenges the faith of Christians-- especially those persons who tell their sisters and brothers to be at peace and be well, but then do nothing to relieve their situation of misery.



Evangelization is a process  
that reaches out to all people.



In accord with Jesus' words "Go and make disciples of all nations", evangelization by nature has a universal character.

Vincent reflected this universal character especially when he sent the Missionaries to Madagascar. The news that he received from the confreres, and his concern for their ministry, illuminated his daily life.



The Church's mission of universal evangelization does not allow us to sleep in peace or to sleep in the comfort of a serene faith. Indeed, we are constantly reminded of the situation of ignorance and misery that so many of our brothers and sisters confront on a daily basis.



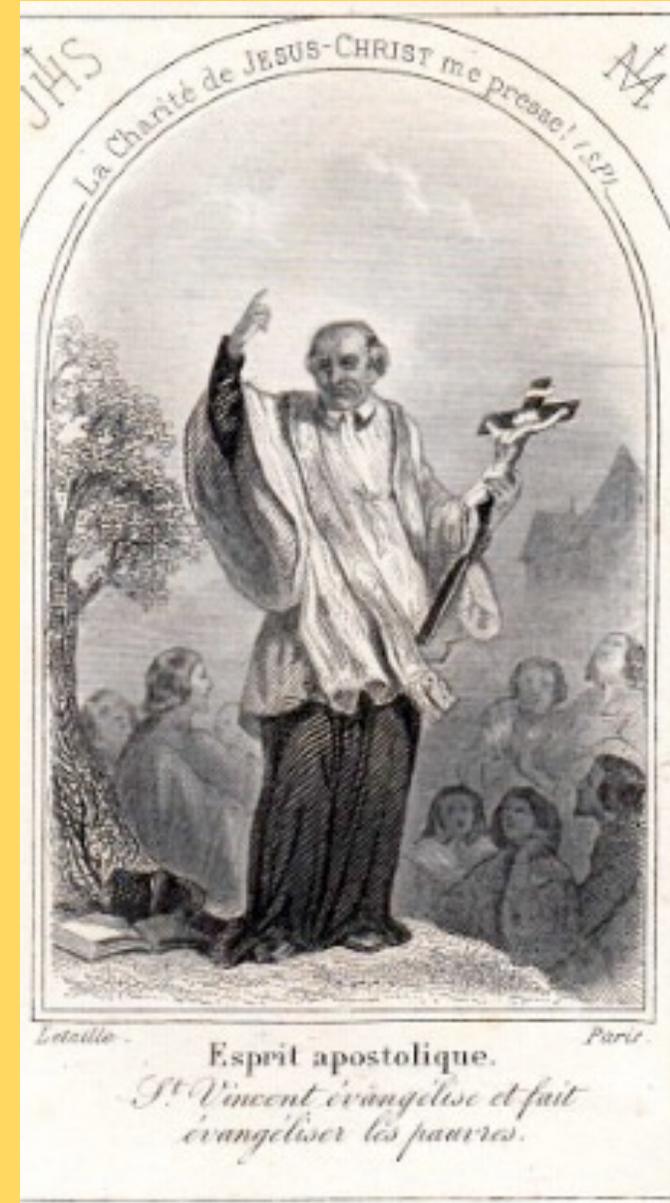
The poor and marginalized will never believe that they are children of God, and the Good News will be like a joke, if we do nothing to promote their dignity.



We ought to be very humble in our proclamation of the good news because very often the poor (without even realizing it) will reveal Jesus to us.



On more than one occasion it was the poor who evangelized Vincent and made him aware of God's call. At some pivotal moments in Vincent's life, the poor were at the crossroads, guiding him on his journey and revealing Jesus Christ to him.



It has been the poor who, at critical moments in the history of the Church, have reminded people about that which is essential (for example, Saint Francis during the XIII century).

If we have a lively faith and if our eyes are open, then we will see the splendor of the Lord's glory in the person of those men and women who are poor.



Overwhelmed by various displays of power and confused and dazed by so many different publicity stunts, the world seems to have turned in upon itself like a mad dog.

Yet it is in the midst of this madness that the Church must find its path, and help humanity find its path.



We will never find that path  
**unless we direct ourselves**  
**to those who have no part in**  
**this tumult because the**  
**world has marginalized**  
**them.**

They have nothing but are  
everything... they are the  
revelation of the living Lord  
who is in the midst of the  
world.



Vincent understood that the poor were not only the beneficiaries of evangelization, but they revealed Jesus Christ and questioned those who were involved in the process of evangelization.

Thus evangelization, at one and the same time, is a proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, and an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.



# To summarize:

**1** Evangelization is directed toward the whole person: that is, toward the mind, the spirit, the heart and the body.

**2** Evangelization is a process that reaches out to all people.

**3** We ought to be very humble in our proclamation of the good news because very often the poor (without even realizing it) will reveal Jesus to us.



# Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

- What is my understanding of evangelization? Can I better integrate spiritual assistance and material assistance?
- How does the process of systemic change enter into the process of evangelization?
- Are we involved with the larger Vincentian Family in our process of evangelization? If not, why not? If so, what difference does this make?

**Source:**

*Vincent de Paul and Evangelization*, various authors

[http://www.famvin.org/wiki/  
Vincent de Paul and Evangelization](http://www.famvin.org/wiki/Vincent_de_Paul_and_Evangelization)