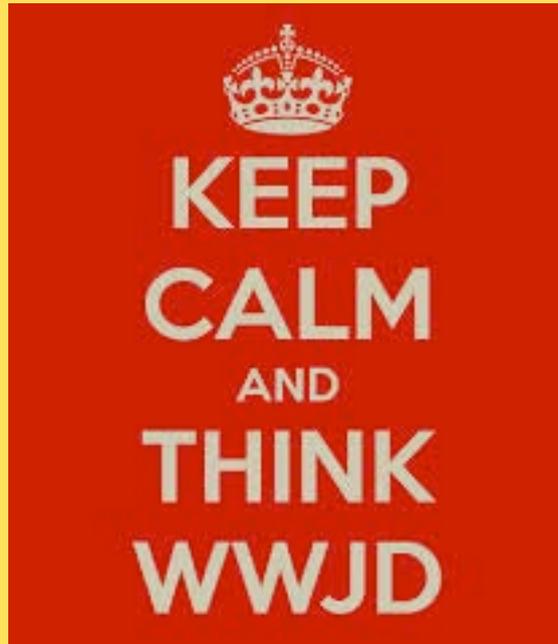


Who Do You Say That I Am?

# WWJD?

(What Would Jesus Do?)

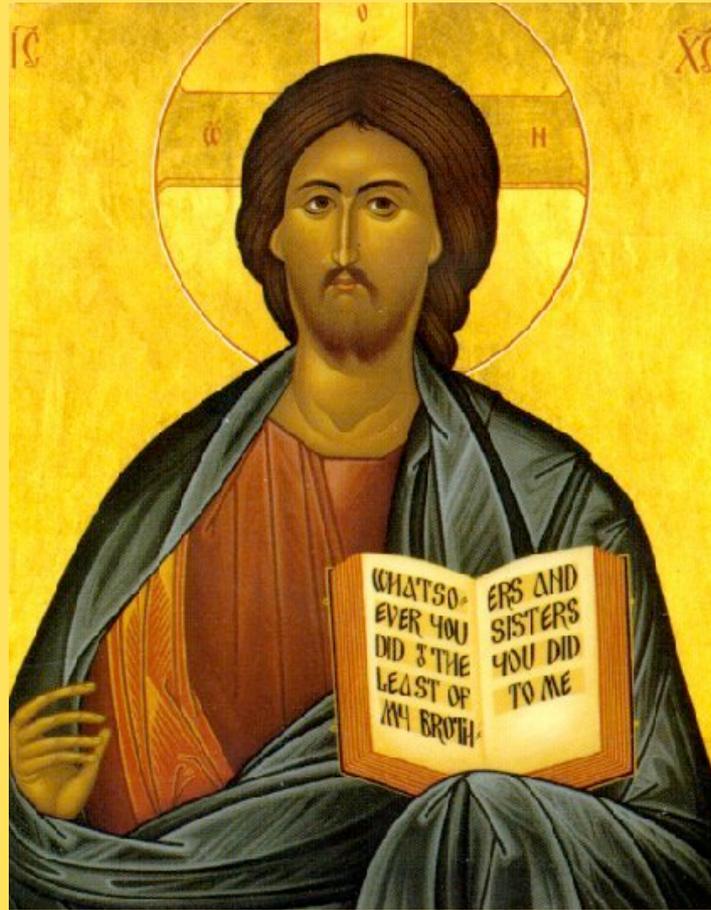


Let's delve into St. Vincent's response to these two questions.

Both questions are pivotal to appreciating St. Vincent's understanding of Jesus.



First...

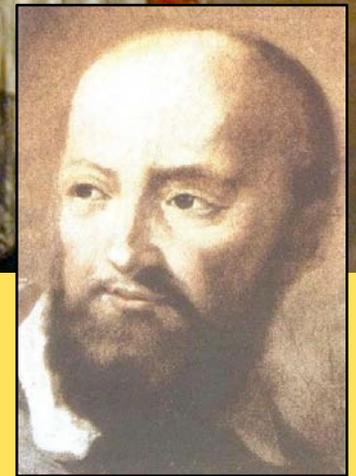
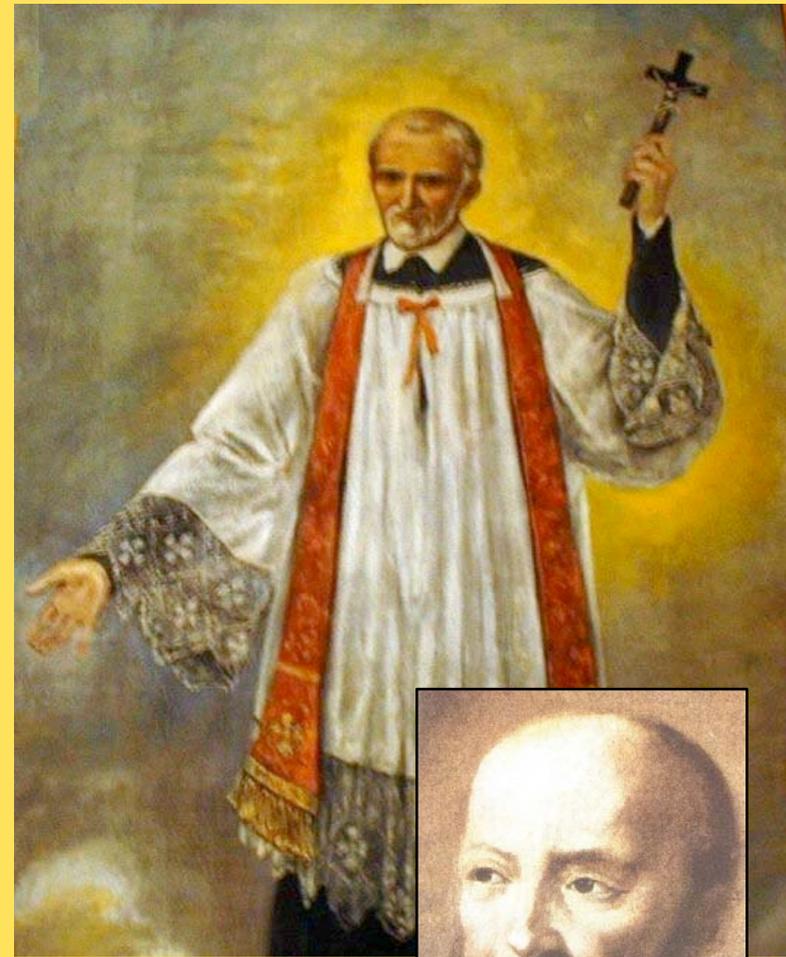


Who Do You Say That I Am?

“When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, *‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’* They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, *‘But who do you say that I am?’*”

-- Matthew 16:13-15

So, who did Vincent say that Jesus was? Here it would be helpful to have a quick overview of the prevailing thinking of Vincent's time regarding Christ. For, there is no doubt that the French School of Spirituality greatly influenced Vincent.



St. Francis de Sales was one of the major figures in the French School of Spirituality

# French School of Spirituality

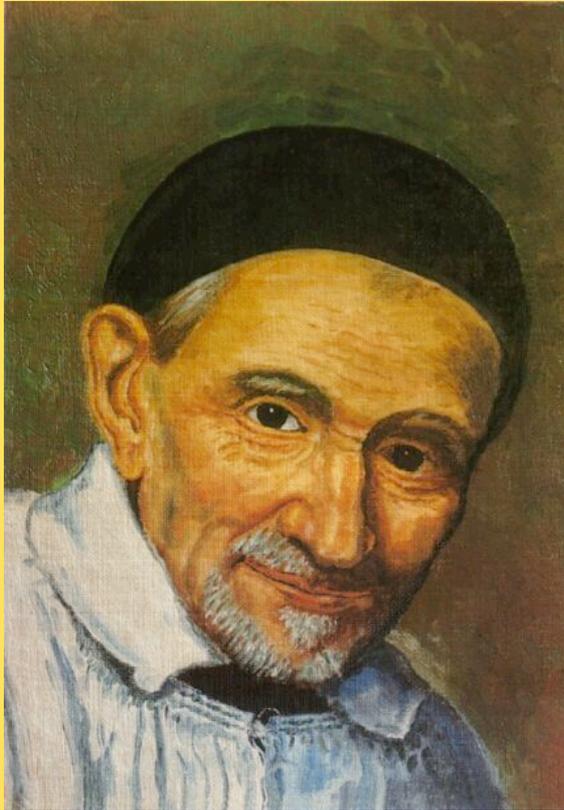
- Christocentric and focused on the **Incarnate Word**.
- **Lived reality**—the experience of Christ—was more important than theory.
- Jesus' **servitude** is the pre-eminent state of the human Jesus.
- Trinitarian, especially the notion of Jesus being “**sent**”.
- Major figures in this school include Cardinal de Bérulle, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, St. John Eudes, Jean-Jacques Olier, St. Jean-Baptist de la Salle, and, of course, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

# St. Vincent's Understanding of Christ



- He recognized Jesus as being sent to evangelize the poor, and urged this as the motto for he and his followers.
- He saw Jesus at work and strove to imitate Him. Love must be both affective and effective.
- He would reflect and learn from his experience of imitating Christ.
- He recognized Christ in others, wanted to uphold their human dignity, and free persons from poverty and suffering.
- He saw Jesus as the source & model of all virtues.
- The imitation of Christ is not a theory but a way of life.
- God's presence could be found in times, events and people.

# St. Vincent's Understanding of Christ



As we consider these points, it becomes clear to us that for Vincent, Christ was not so much an idea as a way to live.

# WWJD?

(What Would Jesus Do?)



WWJD? This question at times seems rather trite. We ask the question, but then are just as quickly prone to do what we think is best. In asking the question, there is a presumption that I already know who Jesus is. Yet, it is not always clear that this is the case.

The question suggests not simply knowing who Jesus is, but a willingness to imitate Him as well. Am I so inclined to doing this?

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;  
Therefore he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor;  
To proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of  
sight to the blind and release to prisoners;  
To announce a year of favor from the Lord.”

-- Luke 4:18-19

**This passage from Luke is the basis for  
Vincent’s understanding of following  
Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor.**



“Our vocation then, is a continuation of His, or, at least, it is in harmony with His in circumstances. Oh! What happiness my brothers! A great motive, then, is the dignity of this employment. To make God known to the poor; to announce Jesus Christ to them; to tell them that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand and that it is for the poor.... For it is above all else the office of the Son of God, and we are applied to do from Heaven what He once did on earth.”

--St. Vincent de Paul

“In this vocation we are in close conformity with our Lord Jesus Christ, who it would seem, made it his principal concern on coming into the world to help the poor and take care of them if the Lord were asked: Why did you come on earth? He would reply: ‘To help the poor.’ ‘Anything else?’ ‘No, to help the poor!’ Should we not be most happy to belong to this Company which has for its end the same one which induced God to become man?”



--St. Vincent de Paul

**Patterning  
ourselves after  
Vincent's  
understanding  
of Christ**



# **“He has sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor.”**

Implications for us as missionaries.

- The missionary is sent by God after the example of Christ himself. This is a calling from God.
- The missionary feels compelled to do this. Thus, it cannot be his or her own will but Christ's.
- The missionary seeks out those who are poor, and does not wait until they come to him or her.
- This missionary makes Christ present to those whom he or she visits.
- In both word and deed the missionary announces Good News to the poor.
- To the extent possible he or she relieves the suffering endured by the poor.



When Frederic Ozanam chose St. Vincent de Paul as the Patron of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, what do you suppose Vincent's understanding of Christ would mean for the Society? For yourself?

Why are home visits so important? Have I ever thought of myself as a missionary?

# **Scripture passages to contemplate**

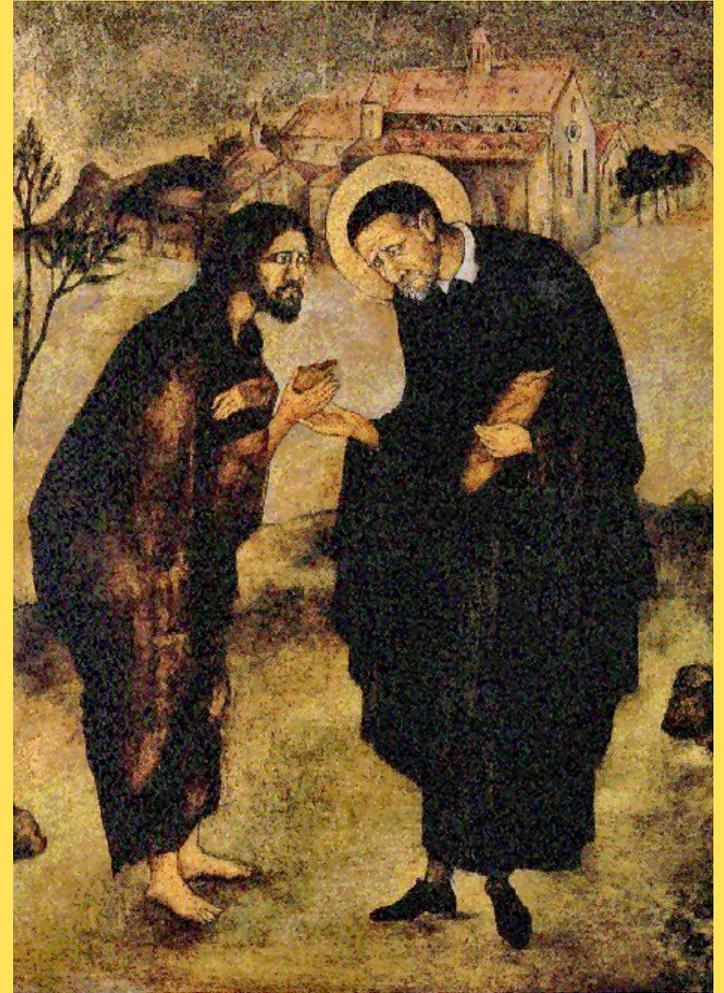
Let us now consider for a moment the recognition of Christ in the poor.

Vincent's awareness of Christ's presence in the poor comes from his personal experience as well as his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Let us take a look at three passages which undoubtedly influenced Vincent's regard for the poor.

# Seeing Christ in the Poor

“I say this not by way of command, but to test the genuineness of your love by your concern for others. For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich.”

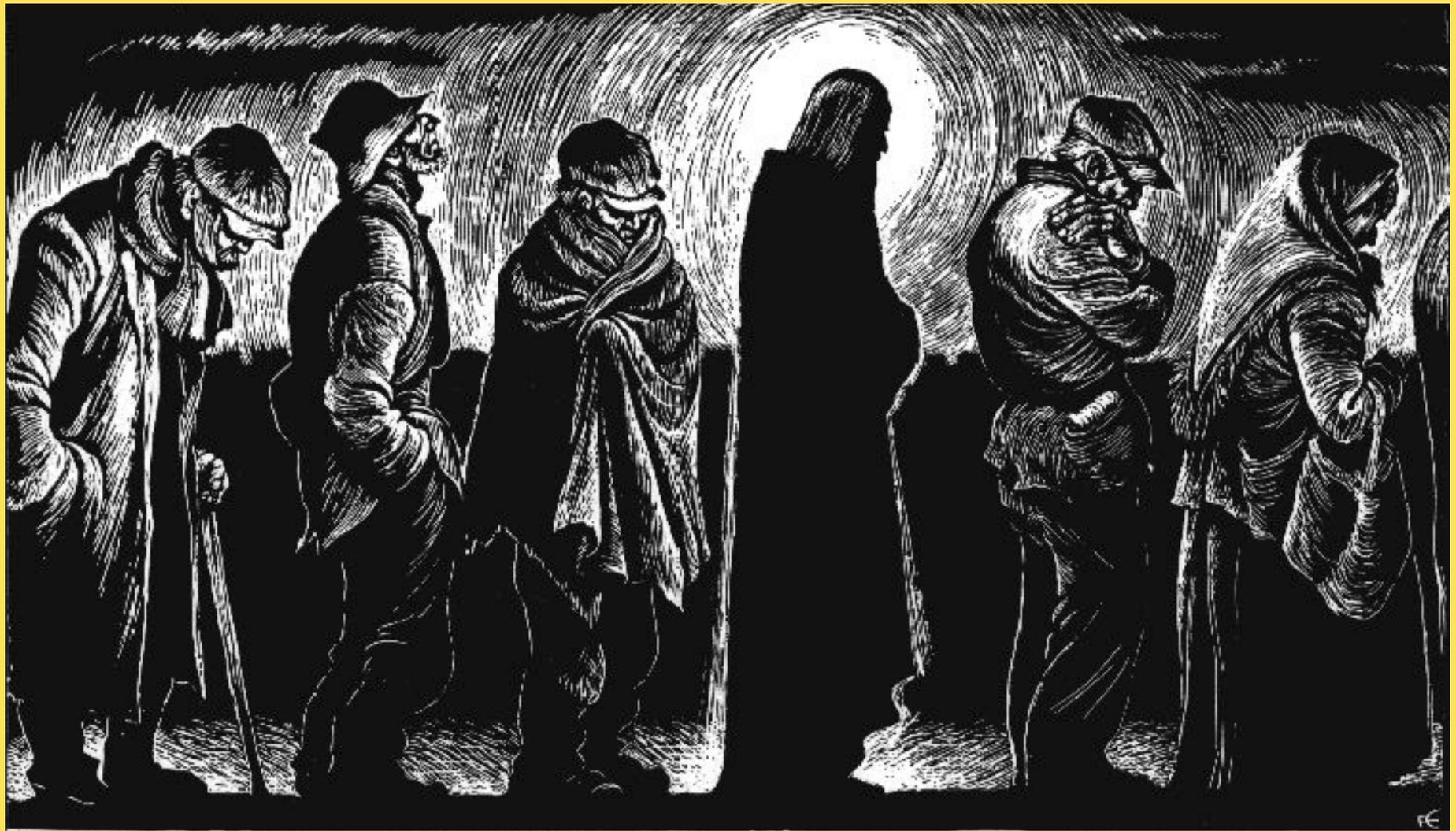


--2 Corinthians 8:8-9



“Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

--Philippians 2:5-8



“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me.”  
--Matthew 25:40



“Who do you say that I am” and “What would Jesus do” are really two sides of the same coin for St. Vincent.

Indeed, knowing Jesus requires a genuine conversion and an ardent desire to do the will of God and nothing else.



If we pattern ourselves after Vincent's understanding of Christ, we can be sure that we are presencing Christ to others and at the same time following Christ evangelizing the poor.

**Adaptation of a presentation by  
Fr. Bruce J. Krause, C.M.**