



*To be a missionary —
that is the calling of Vincentian priests —
to breathe deeply of the missionary spirit
that St. Vincent inspired in the Congregation,
to let it fill our minds and hearts,
and then to go.*



•famvin

ST. VINCENT'S VISION OF PRIESTHOOD

“Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15).

Based on *Vincentian Priesthood as Missionary* by Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., *Vincentiana* 2000, Issue 6

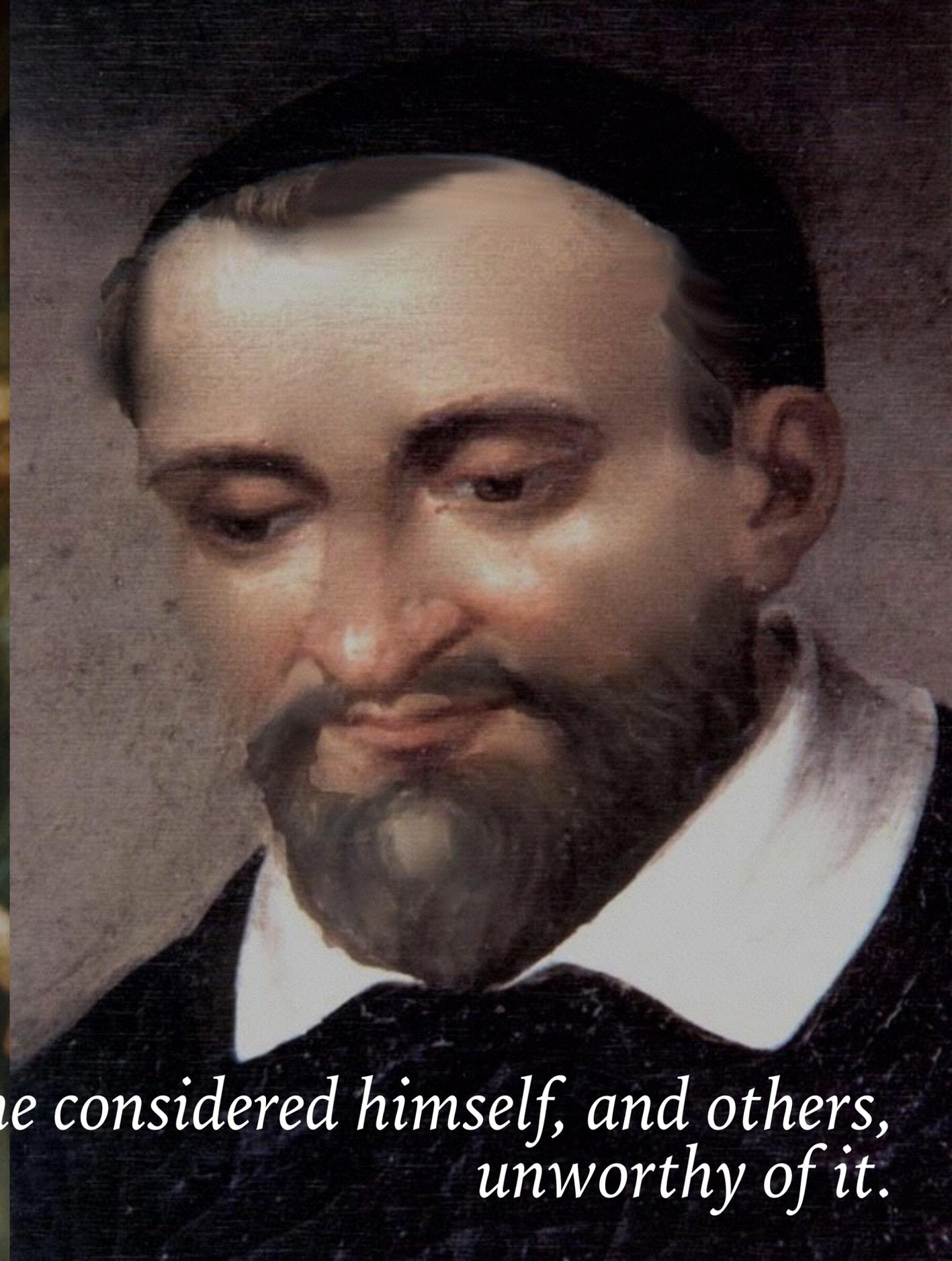
VIEW OF PRIESTHOOD IN ST. VINCENT'S DAY

- Vincent de Paul was certainly influenced by his contemporaries, Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, Jean-Jacques Olier (founder of the Sulpicians), and St. Jean Eudes.
- They spoke of the “exalted” role of the priest and the need for the priest to be holy.

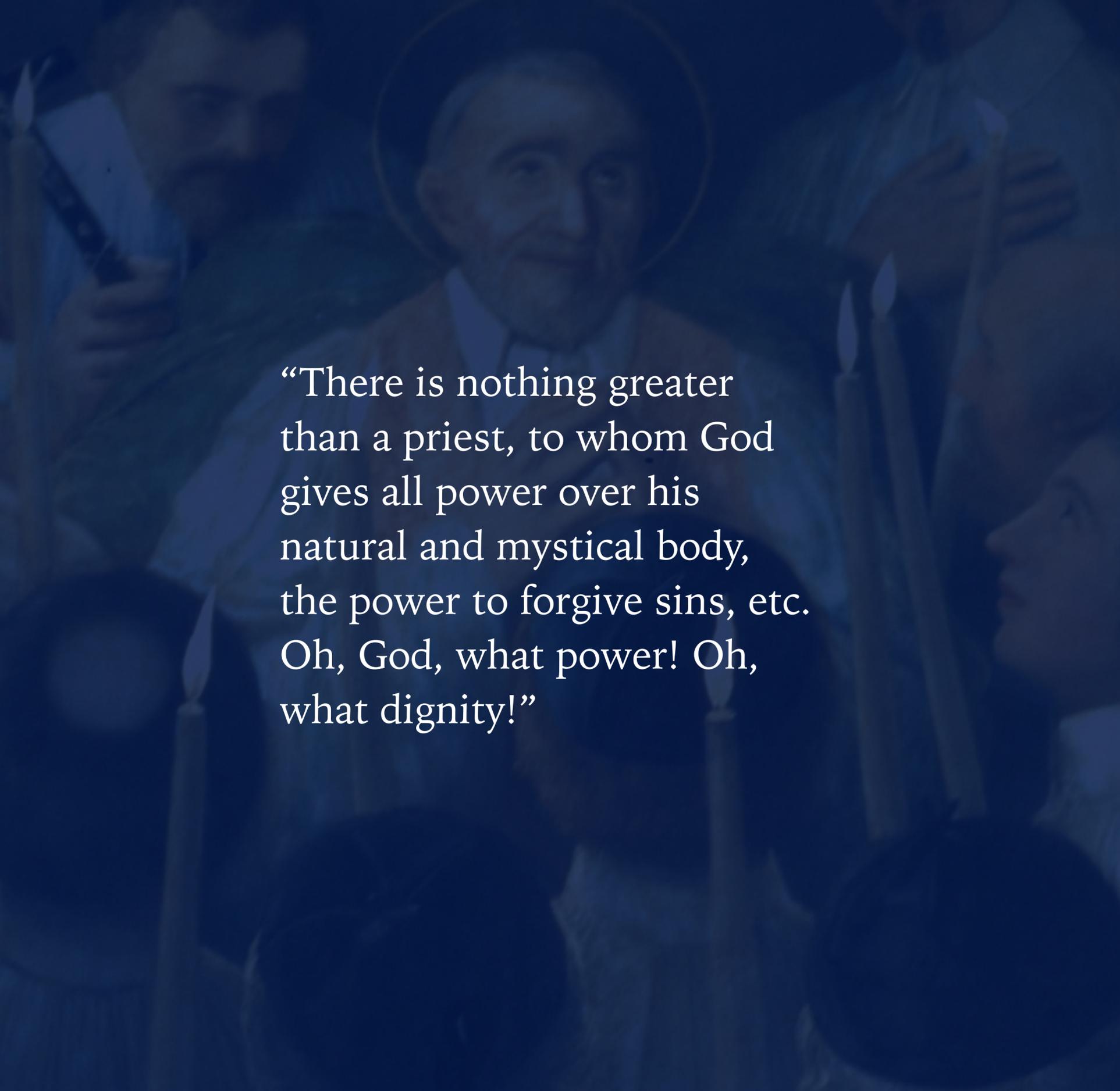
Pierre de Bérulle



*Vincent agreed that the priesthood was
an exalted vocation...*



*...but he considered himself, and others,
unworthy of it.*

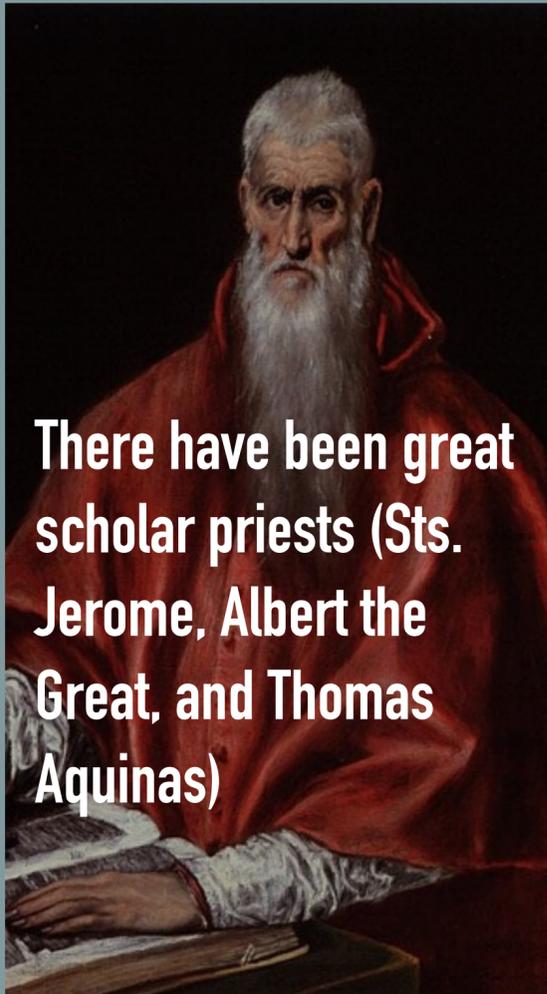


“There is nothing greater than a priest, to whom God gives all power over his natural and mystical body, the power to forgive sins, etc. Oh, God, what power! Oh, what dignity!”

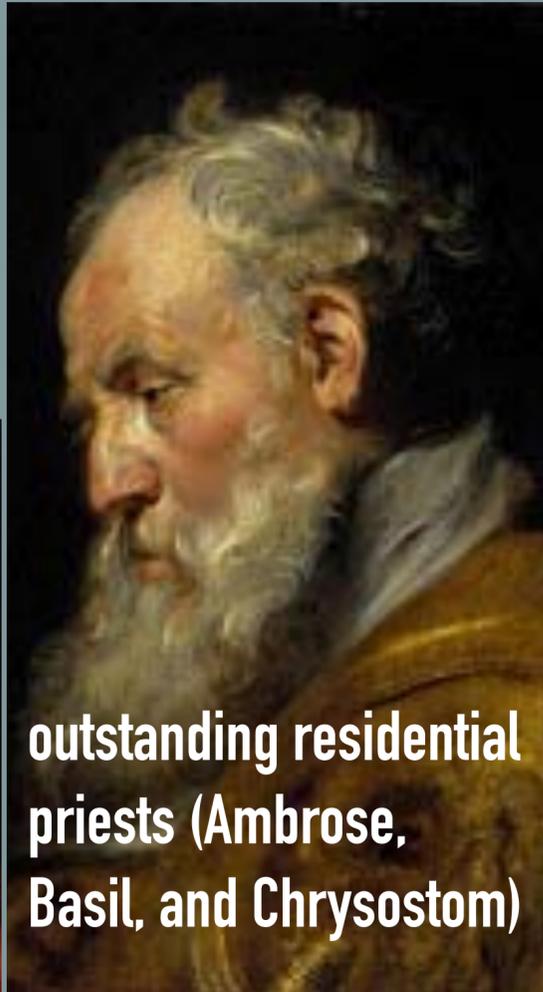
“This state is the most sublime on earth, the very one Our Lord willed to assume and follow. As for myself, if I had known what it was when I had the temerity to enter it — as I have come to know since then — I would have preferred to till the soil than to commit myself to such a formidable state in life...”

➤ *(in short— if he were not already a priest, he might never have become one!)*

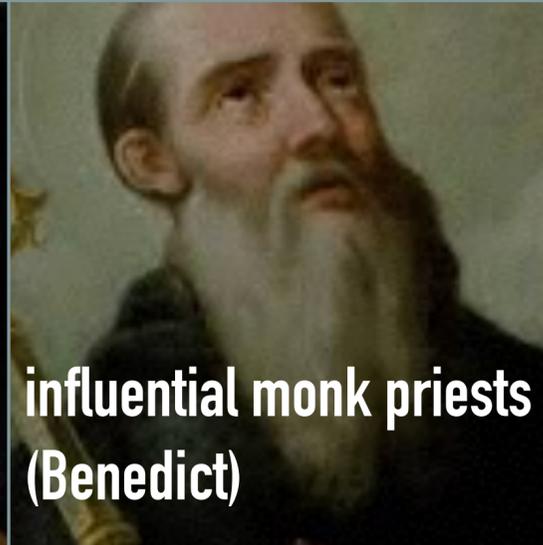
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A PRIEST?



There have been great scholar priests (Sts. Jerome, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas)



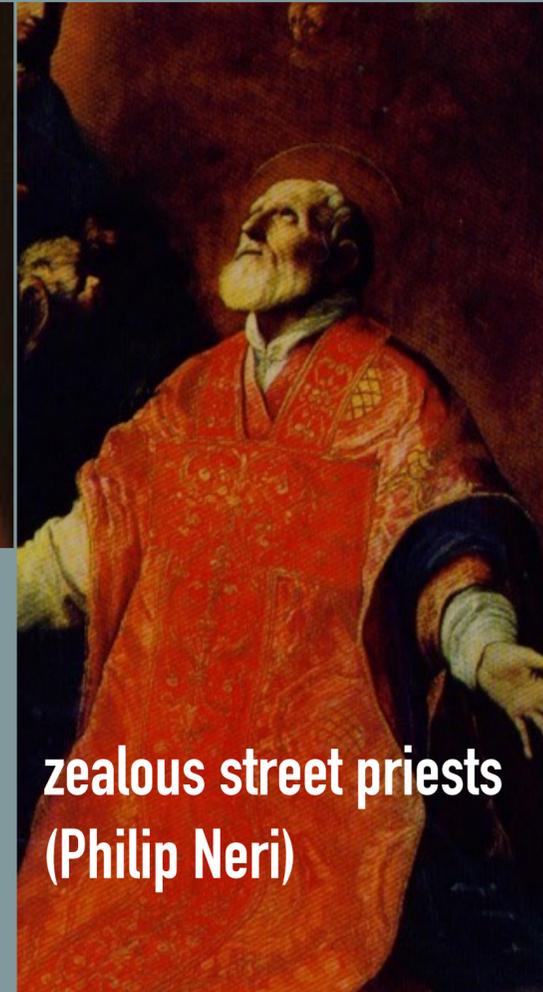
outstanding residential priests (Ambrose, Basil, and Chrysostom)



influential monk priests (Benedict)



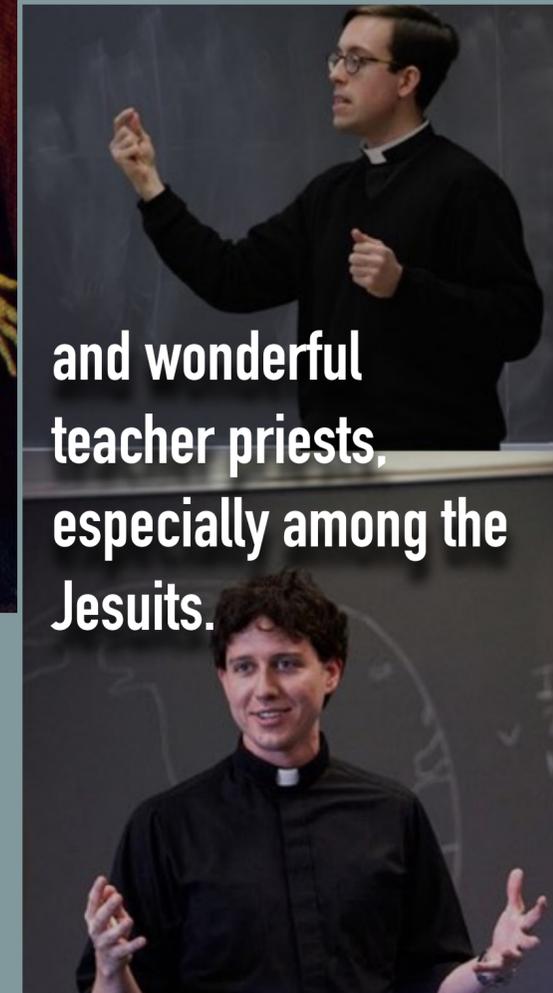
reforming curial priests (Bellarmine)



zealous street priests (Philip Neri)



another model?



and wonderful teacher priests, especially among the Jesuits.

PRIEST AS MISSIONARY

*St. Vincent chose to focus on another model of priesthood
in the Congregation he founded:
the priest as missionary.*

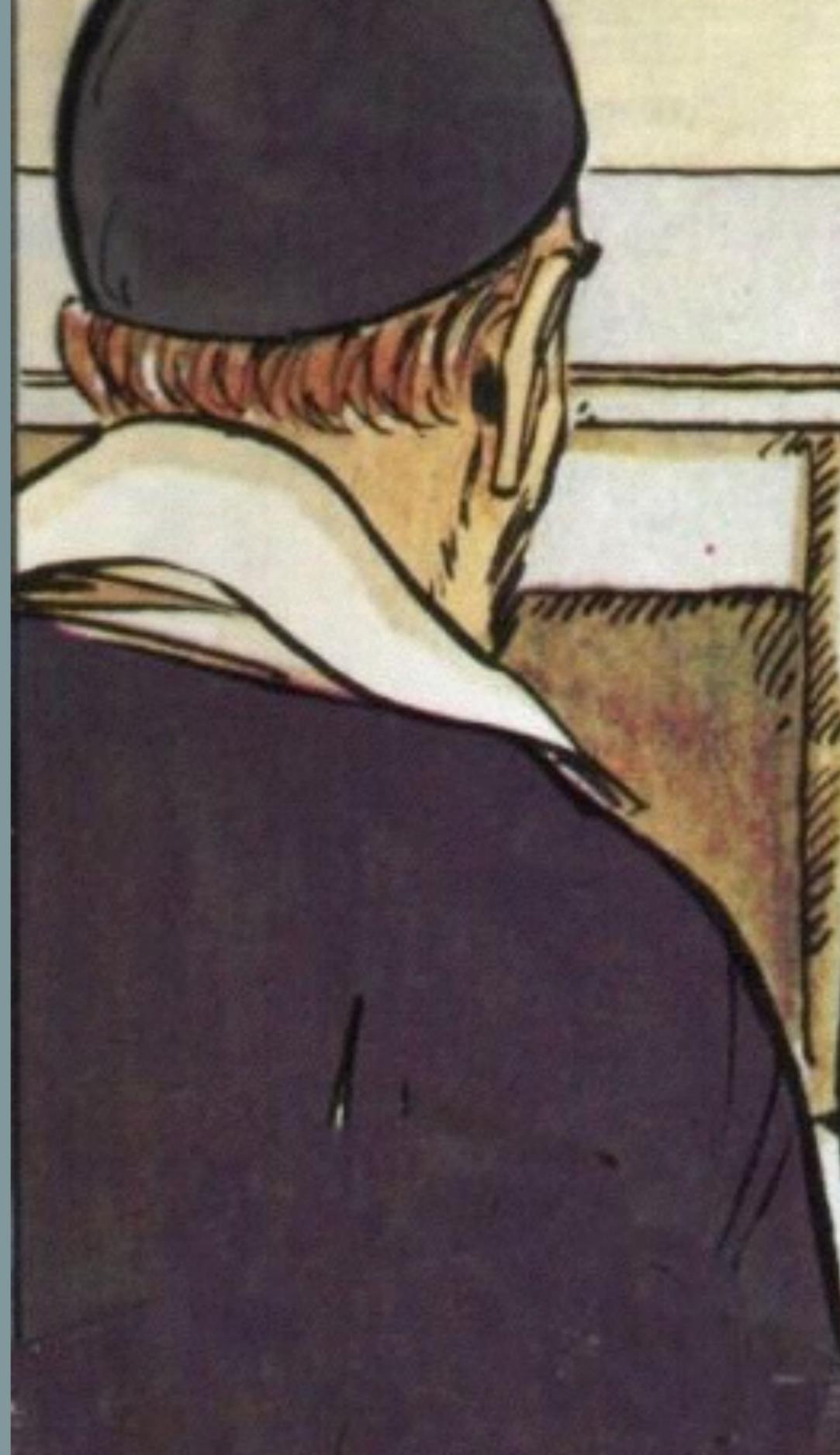


JESUS AS MISSIONARY

- As was often the case with Vincent, his views, while influenced by his teachers, was independent of theirs. He came to see that Jesus the priest is most of all the missionary of the Father, the Evangelizer of the Poor.

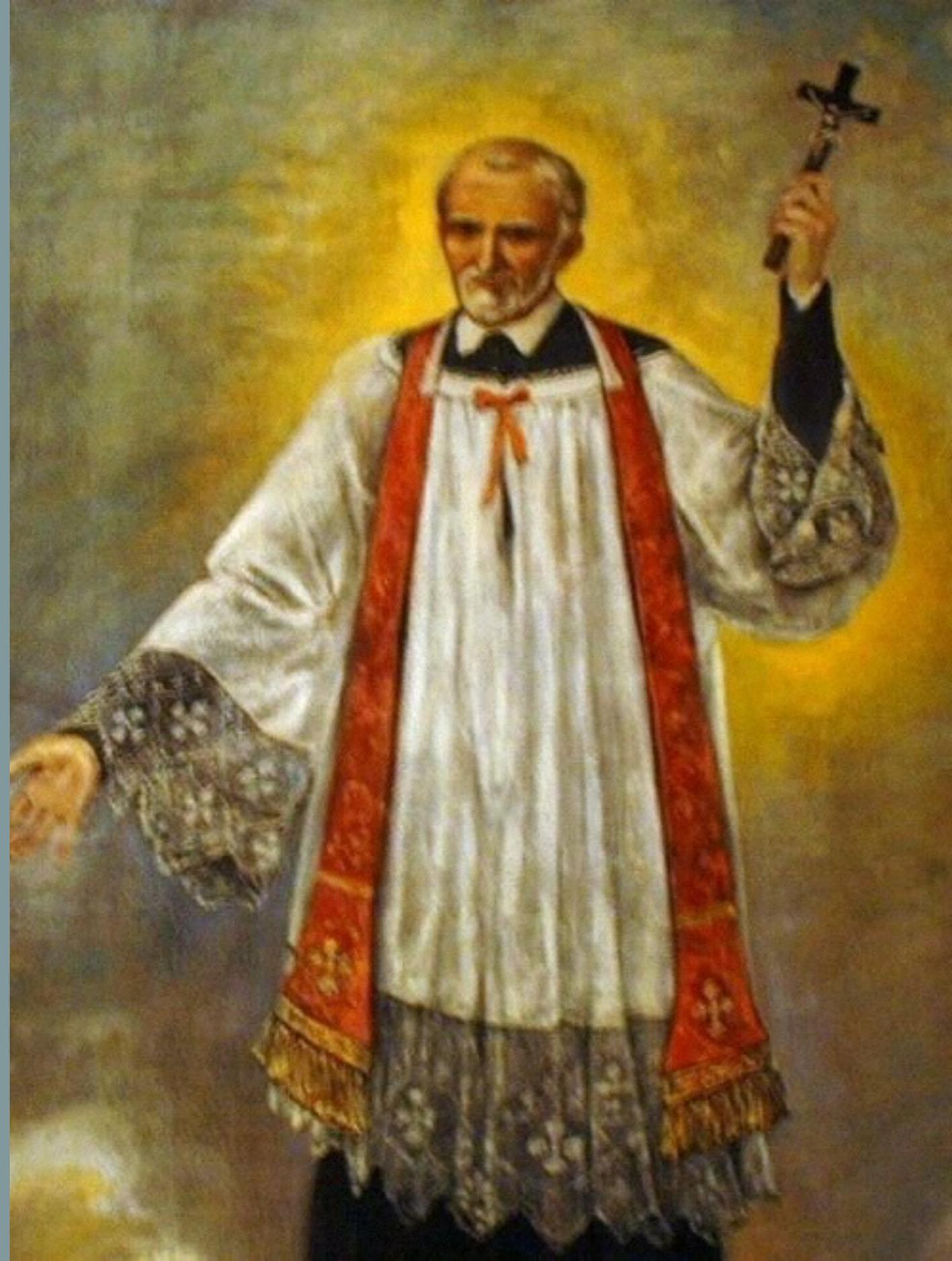


**4 ELEMENTS OF
ST. VINCENT'S
TEACHING ON THE
PRIESTHOOD**



1 PRIESTS WERE IN NEED OF REFORM

- Vincent joined other leaders of his time in the reform of the clergy.
- He was very critical of priesthood as he actually found it in early 17th century France. A large number of the priests Vincent met were ignorant. Their lives were undisciplined and corrupt. Many bishops were self-interested and had little care for their flock.



2 THE PRIEST IS AN INSTRUMENT

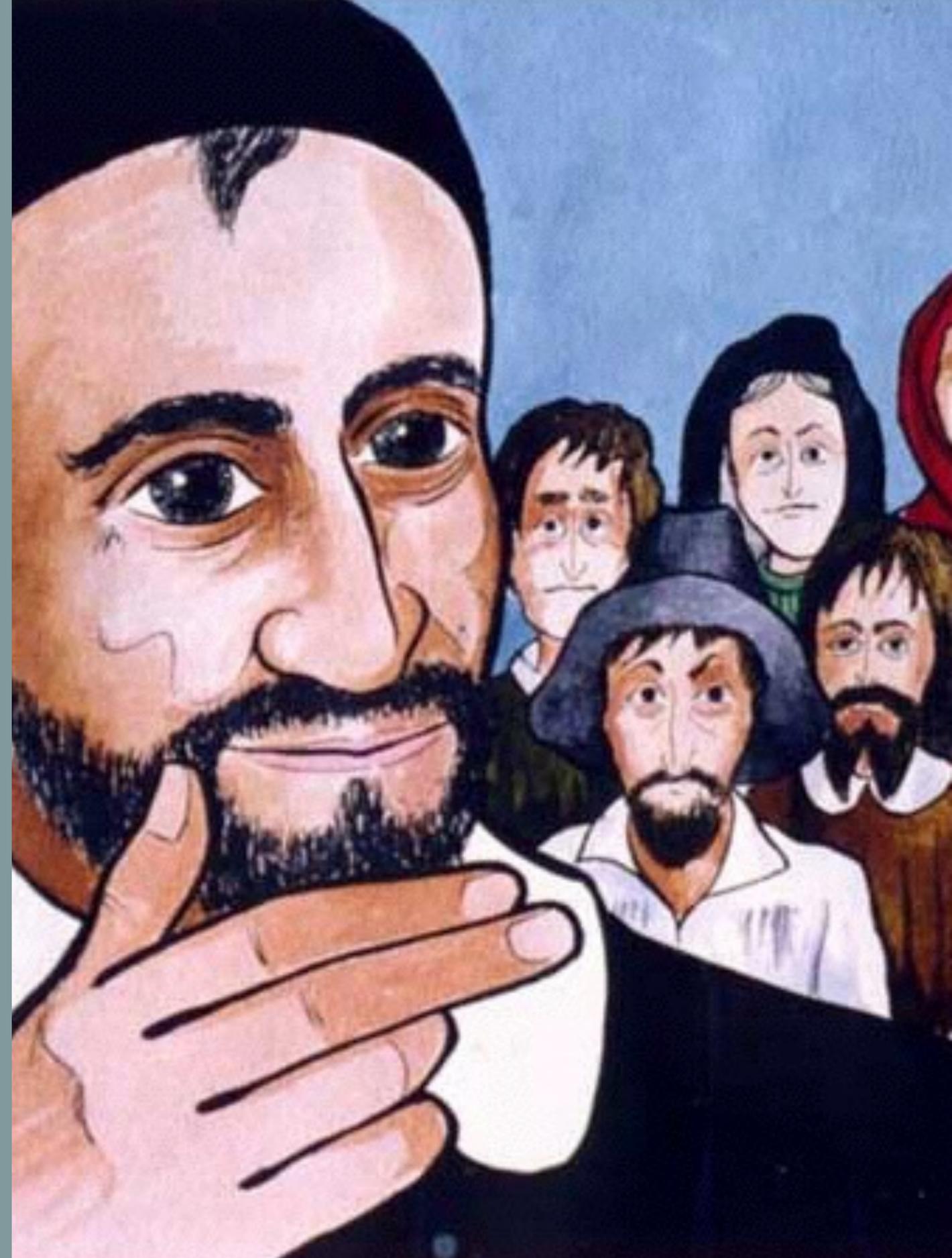
- The priest participates in the priesthood of Jesus. He is an instrument.
- Jesus is *the* priest. All other priests share in Jesus' priesthood. Here, St. Vincent stands in the main stream of the Christian tradition.
- This means the priest must acquire Jesus' virtues, particularly the five missionary virtues to which Vincent calls members of his Congregation. It also means standing before the Father faithfully in prayer and listening to his word. Vincent tells William Desdames on January 30, 1660, that he will find in Christ all virtues and "if you let him do it, he will exercise them in you and for you."



3 THE PRIEST IS A MISSIONARY

- The priest is for Vincent predominantly a missionary, like Jesus and His Apostles.
- “To make God known to the poor, to announce Jesus Christ to them, to tell them that the Kingdom of God is near and that it is for the poor, oh! how great that is.”

[SV XII, 80.]



4 THE PRIEST IS FOR THE POOR

- The whole life of the missionary priest must be dedicated to the poor.
- “Are not the poor the afflicted members of Our Lord? Are they not our brothers? And if priests abandon them who do you imagine will assist them? So, if there are some among you who think that they are members of the Congregation to evangelize the poor and not to aid them, to remedy their spiritual needs and not their temporal ones, I respond that we must assist them in all ways.”

[SV XII, 87]



SOME IMPLICATIONS

The author, Father Robert Maloney, offers the following conclusions...



PRESERVE OUR MOBILE, MISSIONARY NATURE

The Congregation of the Mission, must remain mobile, even in the face of bishops' requests that we take over parishes. The bishop is in charge when we are engaged in an apostolic mission in his diocese, but our own superiors are in charge in choosing what dioceses we go to, how long and under what conditions we will stay, and when we will withdraw.

LIVE AS HUMBLE SERVANTS

Priests are ultimately [humble] servants. Our lifestyle as missionaries should demonstrate this. [We should avoid] triumphalism and lavish celebrations at ordinations.

HAVE A GLOBAL WORLD-VIEW

It is imperative for missionaries to have a global world-view, constantly nourishing a universal sense of the Kingdom and the Church.

BE HOLY

We must be holy: If we share in the missionary vocation of Jesus, then we must “pattern ourselves, as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master himself graciously taught us...”

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MISSIONARY PRIEST TODAY



He is a mobile evangelizer, on fire to spread the good news.



He has an international perspective, a global world-view.



He is in vital interaction with the culture of the country where he serves.



He learns the language of his people.



He is deeply rooted in the scriptures.



He is creative in confronting the needs of the poor.



He is well informed about the social teaching of the Church.



He is engaged in ongoing formation.



He is a man of God, deeply rooted in Christ.



He lives out the five virtues: simplicity, humility, gentleness, self-denial, and zeal.

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