



Honoring St. Vincent

Feast Day Masses are extra-special occasions in 400th anniversary year

Spread throughout the liturgical year are many feast days of special significance to the Vincentians, such as for St. Catherine Laboure in November, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in January, St. Louise de Marillac in May, and St. John Gabriel Perboyre in September.

The feast of St. Vincent de Paul, who founded the Congregation of the Mission, is the most revered of all, and this year even more so as the Vincentians celebrate the 400th anniversary of that founding.

Feast day masses, receptions, and special events were held across the province, as well as in the Vice-Province of Kenya, to pay homage to the man whose

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400 years

Congregation of the Mission
of Saint Vincent de Paul

Winter 2024

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← St. Vincent de Paul Feast Day Masses were held in many parishes in or connected to the Western Province, including St. Catherine Laboure Parish in St. Louis, St. Joseph Parish in New Orleans, and the DePaul Center in Nairobi, Kenya, among others.



Dear Friends,

Grace and peace in the Lord Jesus!

The holiday season, Christmas in particular, is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our blessings and again welcome Christ into the world. As Vincentians, we pay particular attention to those who are moving through this holy season of celebration with less.

Our Annual Appeal, which you can read about in this edition, presents an opportunity for you to actively support our work on behalf of the less fortunate, as well as education initiatives, care for our senior Vincentians, and evangelization programs. You can see in our financial action report how the gifts we receive are allocated among these programs and others to make a real impact in people's lives.

The 400th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission by St. Vincent de Paul is prominent in our minds this year and is represented in these pages in a few ways. We are covering some of the Masses held in September for St. Vincent's feast day, and you can find a list of celebrations scheduled in the province this January to recognize the anniversary.

Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M., offers a glimpse at a little-known but important aspect of St. Vincent's work—as financial manager.

I hope this Christmas and the holidays offer you the opportunity to celebrate Christ's birth with your families and friends and look back on a year well-spent. God bless you, and please pray for me as I do for you.

Sincerely in St. Vincent,

Rev. Joseph S. Williams cm

Reverend Joseph S. Williams, C.M.
Provincial Superior



📍 DePaul Center, Nairobi, Kenya

(continued from cover)

charism drives the Vincentian mission to this day.

"Each of these occasions this year has given us opportunities for greater reflection," said Fr. Joseph S. Williams, C.M., Provincial Superior for the Western Province, "St. Vincent most of all. It was a blessing to celebrate together with our brothers."

📍 St. Joseph Parish, New Orleans, Louisiana





Congregation of the Mission
of Saint Vincent de Paul



St. Vincent de Paul: Financial Manager

We like our saints to look, well, saintly. St. Vincent is often depicted as preaching a mission, carrying abandoned children, or welcoming the poor and abandoned. All saintly images, to be sure. We are not likely to see St. Vincent at a desk, surrounded by account books, receipts, bills, and a cash box. Yet, as superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, our saintly founder spent a great deal of time taking care of financial matters. It was an important part of his work in caring for the Congregation as it grew.

When St. Vincent formally founded the Congregation of the Mission 400 years ago, he was determined that he and his confreres would not receive payment for their ministries. Therefore, when he signed an agreement with his patrons, Monsieur and Madame de Gondi, requiring him and his six companions to preach missions on the de Gondi estates, Vincent received a donation of 45,000 livres. This was a sizeable sum for the time. One condition of the gift was that it be invested in either stock or land. Vincent, son of a farmer, naturally preferred land, which he would lease to others for farming and receive a portion of the income.

Over time, other benefactors would donate all kinds of revenue-producing instruments. For example, in addition to many farms, the Congregation became the owners of mills, barges, various buildings, and even coach lines. One of the largest and most famous gifts was the priory of St. Lazare, which became the headquarters of the Congregation of the Mission and from which the moniker of “Lazarist Fathers and Brothers” originated. This was a rather run-down but large (72 acres) property, just outside the city walls of Paris. It soon became the hub of many ministries, as well as a residence for many of the confreres and others. It was an expensive place to maintain!

As the Congregation grew, and its finances became more and more complex, Vincent wisely turned to others, both inside and outside the community, for guidance in temporal matters.

“Far from being a bad thing to seek advice, you must, on the contrary, do so when the matter is of any importance, or when we cannot come to a clear decision on our own. For temporal affairs, we consult a lawyer or some lay persons who are knowledgeable about them.” (CCD, letter to M. Coglée, July 9, 1650).

Despite the size and complexity of the Congregation’s financial matters, St. Vincent never lost sight of why he had to spend so much time and energy dealing with financial matters.

“We cannot make a better use of earthly goods than to employ them in works of charity; by this means we make them return to God Who is their source and Who is also the last end to which everything should be referred.” (source u/k)

—Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M.



Karibuni Means Welcome

A Reflection on the Vincentians and our Kenya pilgrimage

I came to work as the Communications Manager for the Vincentians in the Congregation of the Mission Western Province in March of 2021. After more than 30 years as a journalist and communications professional, a 2020 layoff, and several months of unemployment, I was seriously considering that, at age 55, my communications career might be over.

Then, the phone rang one afternoon—a recruiter who found my resume online and asked if I would consider interviewing for a new communications position at this organization. I said I would, and several weeks later this amazing chapter started.

From the very start, as I wrote articles, designed brochures, and set up web pages, I started hearing about Kenya and the Vincentian presence there. The Western Province went to Kenya in 1981 and established a mission, which has since grown into a Vice-Province. This is what Vincentians do; they go to the poor, and there is much poverty in Kenya. Through their work in Kenya and many other places, the Vincentians live the Gospel every day, which has inspired me to support their work as a monthly donor.

My new boss, Teresa, had been to Kenya several times on mission trips and hinted I would have the opportunity to go at some point. That chance finally came this September when, after a year of planning, 11 other people and I set out for a pilgrimage to Kenya. (see story on adjoining page)

Over a very active eight days, this diverse group from southern Missouri, St. Louis, and Chicago visited several parish communities in the region surrounding Nairobi.

We prayed with small Christian communities in Nyeri, where I met a little boy named Vincent (pictured). We visited St. Vincent de Paul School in Kamulu, where we divided up and taught lessons to the eager students there. We visited with young parishioners at Holy Cross Parish in Thigio. We witnessed great Vincentian programs like the Jitegemee Program for entrepreneur education, DePaul Woodworking, and the St. Louise de Marillac program for distribution of food to the poor.

Everywhere we went, we heard the same word, “Karibuni,” the Swahili word for “welcome,” and we were embraced as members of those communities. We learned the fitting response, “Asante sana” (“Thank you, very much”).

The other unmistakable feature in the people we met was joy, even amid the struggles and poverty—a lesson for us all. In the places we visited, faith and community are inextricably intertwined. People oftentimes walk two hours or more to attend Mass, and they linger long after it has concluded.

I believe that we are responsible for building the communities in which we live.

We are the change we wish to see in the world, and that starts with lifting each other up. St. Vincent knew this to be true, and, clearly, the Kenyan people do as well.

Asante sana, indeed.

-Christopher Duggan





Friends on the Journey

Kenya Pilgrimage affords experiences in Vincentian Vice-Province

In late September, corresponding with St. Vincent de Paul's feast day on Sept. 27, a group of 12 travelers made a meaningful pilgrimage to the Vincentians in Kenya. The trip represented a return to such events, which had been offered on several occasions prior to the Covid-19 lockdown era in 2020.

Organized by Sharon Essner in the Province Office and Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., Visitor for the Vice-Province of Kenya, the group was in country from Sept. 23 through Oct. 1 and had the opportunity to visit numerous communities, including rural small Christian communities and parishes, a Vincentian school, and various programs run by the Vincentians, such as direct service to the poor and training programs for entrepreneurship and woodworking.

Scan this code for a video from our Kenya Pilgrimage.



They took part in an elaborate outdoor feast day Mass at the DePaul Center in Nairobi and the blessing of a recently completed water project in the Karuiro region.

"We felt like missionaries coming here," said Alina Korn, a youth leader from Vincentian Marian Youth in Ste. Genevieve, MO. "But the reality is that the beautiful, joyful people of Kenya were missionaries to us."



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—Alina Korn

Your Gifts Support the Vincentian Mission

St. Louis Development Office
Revenue for Fiscal Year 2024
(July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024)

Number of
Gifts in FY24:

14,815

Total Amount
Donated in FY24:

\$3,149,682

80% of the Western Province expenses are allocated for mission and ministries,

leaving 20% for administrative and fundraising, which is well within the acceptable range for national and international organizations.

How Donations Were Allocated

\$486,962

Education Formation
in the U.S.

\$27,331

International
Outreach
to the Poor

\$743,524

Kenya Mission
(Education Formation and
Direct Service to the Poor)

\$729,270

Care For Seniors

\$1,162,595

Service to the Poor,
Young People,
& Evangelization
in the U.S.

Annual Appeal 2024 is Underway

Largest effort of the year funds a variety of the Vincentians' work

The Western Province's Annual Appeal, which launched in October, is well underway and will help the Vincentians continue their 400 years of evangelizing the poor.

The appeal seeks to address funding needs for direct service to the poor, education and formation of clergy and laity, support for senior Vincentians, works of evangelization, and youth and young adult ministries.

This issue of *The Vincentian* contains our annual Financial Action Report, which details how more than \$3 million in funding was allocated from the 2023-24 fiscal year, and you can read more about this year's annual appeal on our website at www.vincentian.org/your-support/immediate-needs/.

"The Annual Appeal provides essential resources needed to help the Vincentian priests and brothers carry out their mission," said Teresa Manna, Chief Development and Communications Officer for the Western Province.

"It creates a reliable stream of revenue which enables the Province to plan and implement programs effectively, ensuring that vital services reach those in need. We are extremely grateful to our faithful donors who support the Vincentians and are so committed to the mission. Please continue to be generous."

Pat Poehling, who coordinates various assistance programs for the poor at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis, said working for the poor guides her faith formation in the Vincentian charism.

"Working with the Vincentians puts the face and hands of Christ in the work that we do," she said. "It reminds me that I need to practice inclusion and that the people we serve are not just clients or neighbors but our brothers and sisters and we become the face of Christ in their lives, sometimes when they are feeling most alone and abandoned by us and their God."

400th Anniversary Masses and Events Planned throughout the Province

To commemorate the anniversary, a plenary indulgence has been granted by Pope Francis to anyone who attends an anniversary Mass for the Congregation of the Mission and completes the usual conditions.

HOLY TRINITY PARISH

3811 Oak Lawn Ave., Dallas, Texas

The parish will celebrate with a day of service, worship, and celebration Saturday, Jan. 25. The Food Pantry will be open that morning, and the parish is organizing a Day of Service on and off campus, wherever the need is for volunteers. A concelebrated Saturday Vigil Mass will be held at 5 p.m. with Fr. Milton Ryan, C.M., and Fr. Bemnet Melaku, C.M., followed by the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and Party in the Community Life Center.

SACRED HEART PARISH

529 I St., Patterson, California

An anniversary Mass will be held at 8 a.m., Jan. 25, celebrated by Fr. Tino Tran, C.M., Pastor of the parish, followed by a reception in the parish hall.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH

621 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, California

A solemn Eucharist will be celebrated at 4 p.m., Jan. 25, celebrated by Cardinal Roger Mahoney, who will give the homily. The Mass will be followed by a 5:15 p.m. reception at the parish, open to members of all branches of the Vincentian family and friends of St. Vincent de Paul.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH

1010 W. Webster Ave, Chicago, Illinois

Plans are in the works for a Mass in January and additional events and celebrations to observe the 400th anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission and the 150th anniversary of the parish in Chicago. More specifics will be announced later.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH

1408 S. 10th St., St. Louis, Missouri

St. Vincent's will celebrate the founding with a 10 a.m. Mass on Jan. 25. St. Louis Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski will be the principal celebrant with Anchorage-Juneau Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M., offering the homily. Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M., and other Vincentian priests will be concelebrants. The Mass will be followed by a luncheon in the parish hall.

Richardson Impact Fund

New Program Will Benefit Vincentian Mission Partners

The new Richardson Impact Fund is seeing its first four recipients this fall in remembrance of the late Vincentian university leader.

The fund is named for Rev. John Richardson, C.M., who passed away in March 2022 at the age of 99, having served much of his time in ministry at DePaul University in Chicago, including 12 years as its President.

Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Western Province, presented the first check, for \$150,000, to DePaul College Prep High School in Chicago on Oct. 25 to provide scholarships to students in financial need so they can receive a Catholic education.

Also scheduled for this fall were presentations of \$150,000 for student scholarships to St. Vincent de Paul High School in Perryville, MO; \$100,000 to the St. Charles Lwanga Center in St. Louis for faith formation programs for underprivileged adults; and \$100,000 to the Rebuild Center in New Orleans for programs for homeless clients there.

"The purpose of the Richardson Impact Fund is to benefit Vincentian mission partners who carry out the charism of St. Vincent in everyday works," said Fr. Williams. "Our hope is that it will help them make an even bigger impact."

The Western Province is committed to building up the Richardson Impact Fund and making annual distributions.

Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M., Provincial Superior for the Western Province, presented the first Richardson Impact Fund check to Mary Dempsey, President of DePaul College Prep High School in Chicago on Oct. 25. Also pictured are (from left) Board President Joe Haugh, Principal Dr. Megan Stanton-Anderson, and Dr. Rob Karpinski, DePaul University Associate Vice-President for Academic and Library Affairs and DePaul Prep Board Vice Chair.





CONGREGATION
of the **MISSION**

THE VINCENTIANS
WESTERN PROVINCE

3701 Forest Park Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63108



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Learn more about the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, join us in prayer, and offer your support. Visit us online at vincentian.org and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/CMWesternProvince.

Former Provincial Fr. McDevitt Assumes Leadership Role in Belleville Diocese



Fr. Patrick J. McDevitt, C.M., who served as Provincial Superior for the Western Province from 2020 to 2024, has been appointed the Diocesan Chancellor and the Director for Mission and Planning for the Diocese of Belleville, as announced by Bishop Michael McGovern of the Diocese of

Belleville. He started in the new role on Oct. 7, 2024.

Fr. McDevitt was ordained to the priesthood in 1986 and has worked nationally and internationally in parish ministry, seminaries, and universities, including at DePaul University in Chicago, starting in 1996 as a summer adjunct professor in the Counseling Program. He started teaching full-time in 2000 and retired from DePaul University in 2019 as Professor Emeritus and also served as President of All Hallows College in Dublin, Ireland.

In July 2019, Fr. McDevitt was appointed the Rector and Superior of the Vincentian Seminary (DePaul Centre) in Nairobi, Kenya. He was elected Provincial of the Western Province in March 2020, and completed his term as Provincial on June 30, 2024.

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“This new role offers me the opportunity to serve a missionary diocese and to work directly with clergy and lay leaders in planning, leadership formation, and mission development.”

— Fr. Patrick J. McDevitt, C.M.

Fr. McDevitt has an extensive record of professional and civic leadership through his service on boards and membership in various professional associations.

“It is an honor to be asked by Bishop Michael McGovern to serve as Chancellor and the Director of Mission and Planning,” Fr. McDevitt said. “This new role offers me the opportunity to serve a missionary diocese and to work directly with clergy and lay leaders in planning, leadership formation, and mission development.”

Please join us in prayer for Fr. McDevitt in his new ministry.