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Liturgical Prayers in Honor of Saint Vincent de Paul

By

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M.

Introduction

The Latin expression _lex orandi lex eredendi_ ["The way of praying is the way of believing"] can be applied usefully to study the liturgical prayers developed in honor of Vincent de Paul. Of all the liturgical materials composed for him, including the many hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours, the collects stand out as the most indicative of the _lex credendi_. This study gathers the texts of these rich and varied prayers and analyzes their content to examine the Church’s ideals expressed in its prayers to honor Saint Vincent.

The earliest prayer (see I) mentioning the servant of God Vincent de Paul was one approved by the general assembly of the Congregation of the Mission of 1668. The assembly offered it for the Congregation to pray to preserve this spirit. The official Roman collects¹ developed between the time of his beatification in 1729 (II) and his canonization in 1737 (III, IV), because the Holy See approved liturgical formularies for the new blessed and saint. With his increasing recognition, two other feasts, both with proper collects, were added to the Vincentian calendar. The first commemorated the solemn translation of his relics to the new motherhouse in 1830 (V). The second recalled the papal proclamation of Saint Vincent as heavenly patron of those works of charity that in any way stem from him (VI). One other set, approved in 1903 for use by the Congregation of the Mission, was never introduced (VII). Lastly, in the revised liturgical formularies called for after the Second Vatican Council and approved in 1973, a special collect appeared for the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. It marked the day when Saint Vincent preached the first sermon of the Mission in 1617 (VIII).

The other texts (IX), still in use, are based on earlier work, mainly the Vincentian propers of 1741. In addition to these prayers approved by the Holy See, there are six others composed for use in certain dioceses in France (V[b], X, XI, XII[a], XII[b], XIII). Four collects of a private nature have also been included. The first (XIV) was a series approved by the Congregation for use during the Tercentenary of the death of Saint Vincent. Four others (XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII) show how the ideals expressed in liturgical prayers were articulated even privately. A generic prayer taken from the ritual of blessings (XIX) has been added.² Lastly, a modern composition (XX) in use in

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¹ A "collect" is the short form of liturgical prayer characteristic of the Roman Rite. These prayers are directed to God the Father or to Jesus Christ, never to the saints. The term is also applied to the Prayer over the Gifts (or "secret"), and the Prayer after Communion (or "postcommunion"). Here, the names of the prayers are given in Latin: Oratio (Collect), Secreta (Prayer over the Gifts), and Postcommunio (Prayer after Communion).

² A similar study might be done of the proper sequences and prefaces, as well as the numerous hymns
the Anglican Church has been added, testifying to Vincent’s broad appeal. Another, of a completely different character, tells more about the revolutionary period and the influence of the Enlightenment than it does about Saint Vincent. It appears here only for the sake of curiosity and completeness (see note 19).

The collects appear in sense lines for ease in reading; the translations, also in sense lines, are the work of the author where no English translation exists.

Following each text is a brief comment on the contents of the prayer. This is arranged according to what each prayer says about God, about Vincent de Paul, and about the results being prayed for.

Only the texts of those prayers that do not appear elsewhere in this compilation are given. The standard conclusions have been omitted from the prayers.

Texts

A. A Prayer for the Congregation of the Mission

I. A prayer for the founder’s spirit (1668).3

Excita, Domine, in Congregatione nostra Spiritum
cui famulus tuus Vincentius servivit,
ut eodem nos repleti
studeamus amare quod amavit,
et opere exercere quod docuit.

3 Recueil des principales circulaires des superieurs generaux... (Paris, 1877), 1:96. This and other prayers were also offered for use during the tercentenary celebrations of the saint’s death. (“Aliquot preces quae per annum trecentenarium recitari possunt,” Vincentiana 22 [1959], 157-58.) Slightly different versions are found in Devotio communis, an unofficial compilation for which the compiler(s) used a certain liberty in drawing up new collects for devotional use: Excita, quaesumus, in Congregatione nostra, et in cordibus nostris spiritum... (p. 162); Excita, quaesumus Domine in nobis spiritum charitatis quo Sanctum Vincentium Confessorem tuum replere dignatus es, et concede, ut cujus pia merita veneramur, per ejus ad te exempla gradiamur (p. 167). (Devotio Communis Sacerdotum et Clericorum Congregationis Missionis pro majori commoditate in unum Collecta et Reimpressa [Warsaw, 1826].)
O Lord, arouse in our Congregation the spirit
which animated your servant Vincent,
that, filled with the same spirit,
we may enthusiastically love what he loved,
and practice what he taught.

In this prayer, the early Congregation recognized that the spirit of zeal
animated its Founder, the servant of God Vincent. The Congregation prays for the
same affective ("love") and effective ("practice") charity.4

B. Official Roman Collects and Variants
II. Feast of Blessed Vincent de Paul, 19 July (C.M. Proper, 1729)5

Oratio

Deus, qui ad evangelizandum pauperibus
derelictorum infirmorumque miseries sublevandas,
et Ecclesiastici Ordinis decorem promovendum,
Filiis tuis spiritum in apostolica Beati Vincentii a Paulo
charitate et humilitate suscitasti:
ejus nobis intercessione concede,
ut a peccatorum miseriis sublevati,
eadem tibi semper charitate et humilitate placeamus.

O God, to evangelize the poor,
relieve the miseries of the abandoned and the sick,
and promote the dignity of the clerical state
you raised up the spirit of your Son
in the apostolic charity and humility of Blessed Vincent de Paul;
grant us by his intercession,
that removed from the miseries of sin,
we may ever please you by the same charity and humility.

This collect was the first one approved officially, by Pope Benedict XIII. It set the
tone for those to come. The text shows that God had three purposes in Vincent’s

4 This prayer was taken from the collect for the octave of the feast of Saint Lawrence, 17 August. Excita,
Domine, in Ecclesia tua Spiritum cui beatus Laurentius Levita servivit; ut, etc.
5 Office pour la fête du Bienheureux Vincent de Paul. A la messe et à vespres, selon l’usage du diocèse de Paris
(Paris, 1729). Benedict XIII later approved this oration for the office and mass. It was reprinted (in a
French translation) as the official commemorative oration for Vincent’s canonization, undoubtedly before
the official oration after the canonization was approved by the Holy See. Various French dioceses adopted
this prayer for their particular liturgies. For example: Breviarium Susessionense [Soissons] (1742, dated, erro-
neously, 29 July); Breviarium Tolosanum [Toulouse] (1770; Missale 1774). The different liturgical celebra-
tions in various French dioceses led to some lack of uniformity in the houses of the Congregation. For
a general bibliographical listing, see “Essai de bibliographie des Offices de Saint Vincent de Paul (1729-
1900),” Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission 102 (1937), 772-76. See also Pierre Coste, C.M., The Life &
1952), 3:462ff. The feast had been originally foreseen for 27 September, but was transferred to 19 July.
life: evangelizing the poor, promoting the well being of the abandoned and the sick, alluding to the work of the Daughters of Charity, and caring for the clergy. Blessed Vincent exercised the charity of the apostles and humility to accomplish these purposes. The Church prays that it might imitate Vincent's characteristic virtues.

Secreta

Da nos, Deus, diligere decorem domus tuae
et Agnum inviolatum quotidie, in illa eo zelo ferventes offerre
quo Beatvs Vincentius ad minora negligenda nulla,
et ad majora suscipienda omnia Clericalis Ordinis officia exarsit ipse
et suis dociles praeceptis accendit.

Grant us, O God, that we may love the beauty of your house,
and offer the spotless Lamb in it each day with the same zeal
with which Blessed Vincent himself,
neglecting none of the minor points and fulfilling all the major ones,
brought great fire to all the duties of the priesthood,
and inflamed his disciples with enthusiasm for his teaching.

The Church prays that its love for the liturgy and daily offering of the Eucharist may be as zealous as Vincent's. Influencing his disciples by his example, Vincent exercised care for the rubrics. The term "disciples" likely refers both to his confreres and the members of the Tuesday Conferences. Vincent is not known to have taught classes to seminarians.

Postcommunion

Vilem sibi, fratribus utilem, tibi gratum, servum tuum Vincentium venerati
gratias tibi, Deus, Eucharistico egimus Sacrificio et convivio:
da, quaesumus,
ut ejus intercessione ac imitatione
referamus hinc dictorum factorumque Christi tui omnium memoriam semper
praesentem,
et opportunam in omnibus expressionem.

Having venerated your servant Vincent,
contemptible in his own eyes, useful to his brethren, and pleasing to you,
we have thanked you, O God, in this Eucharistic Sacrifice and banquet;
grant us, we beg you, that by his intercession, and by our imitation of him,
we may thus ever keep in mind all the words and deeds of your Christ,
and bring them to a proper expression in all we do.
In this strange text, the Church prays that it might follow the words and deeds of Jesus, putting them into effect. In so doing, it would imitate Vincent, characterized as humble, useful (zealous), pious, and a model for Christian life.

III. Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, (Roman Missal, 1741), 19 July

Oratio

Deus, qui ad evangelizandum pauperibus
et ecclesiastici ordinis decorum promovendum
beatum Vincentium apostolica virtute roborasti:
praesta, quaesumus;
ut, cujus pia merita veneramur,
virtutum quoque instruamur exemplis.

O God, to evangelize the poor, and further the dignity of the clerical state
you strengthened blessed Vincent with the strength of the apostles;
grant us, we beg you,
that having venerated his holy merits,
we may also be strengthened by the examples of his virtues.

In this prayer, the purposes which God had in mind for Vincent are reduced to two from the three given in the prayer written after his beatification. They are:
to evangelize the poor and care for the clergy. Vincent had apostolic qualities. The Church prays for strength to imitate his virtues.

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6 Missale Romanum. French diocesan liturgies generally adopted this standard collect. For example, in chronological order: Missale Bellovacense [Belley] (1756); Breviarium Claromontense [Clermont] (1774); Missale Parisiense [Paris] (a proper mass, 1777); Missale Aniciensis [Annecy] (1783; breviary, 1837); Breviarium Aduense [Autun] (1823/24); Breviarium Alcucianum [Auxerre] (1827); Breviarium Versalense [Versailles] (1828); Breviarium Bellovacense [Belley] (1829); Breviarium Lingonense [Langres] (1830); Breviarium Albense [Albi] (1830); Breviarium Biscinimum [Besançon] (1831); Breviarium Avaraense [Aire] (1847); Missale Olomucense [Olomouc, in Czech Republic] (1852) and the diocese of Coutances-Avranches (1859). The text adopted in the Breviarium Trecense [Troyes] (in an undated supplement) changed Beatum ["blessed"] to Sanctum ["Saint"], the only text to do so, although the term Beatus often referred not to the canonical state of a person but to his or her blessedness in heaven, and hence it was another term for Saint. Even though this formulary was proper to the Congregation of the Mission, some French dioceses adopted this collect for their own use; for example: Breviarium Andegavense [Angers] (1737); Missale Carnotoense [Chartres] (1782); and Missale Turonense [Tours] (1784). The secret (prayer over the gifts) and postcommunion were taken from the Mass pro confessore non pontifice.

7 Or: virtue.
IV. Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul (C.M. Proper, 1741), 19 July

Oratio

Deus, qui, ad salutem pauperum et cleri disciplinam,
novam in Ecclesia tua per beatum Vincentium familiam congregasti, 
da, quasemus; 
ut eodem nos quoque spiritu ferventes, 
et amemus quod amavit 
et quod docuit operemur.

O God, for the salvation of the poor, and the education of the clergy 
you brought together a new family in your church by means of 
Blessed Vincent, 
grant, we beg you, 
that inflamed by the same spirit, 
we, too, might love what he loved, 
and practice what he taught.

This prayer was evidently based on the prayer for the founder’s spirit (I). 
It says that God had two divine purposes: to save the poor, and to teach the clergy 
through a new family in the Church (the Congregation of the Mission). Vincent, 
alight with God’s spirit, was charitable (loving), and a teacher. The Church prays 
that it may experience both affective (“love”) and effective (“practice”) imitation.

Secreta

Deus, qui beato Vincentio divina quotidie celebranti 
mysteria tribuisti quod tractabat imitari: 
ejus nobis precibus indulge; 
ut immaculatam hostiam offerentes, 
ipsi quoque in holocaustum tibi acceptum transeamus.

God, you granted Blessed Vincent, 
as he was daily celebrating the divine mysteries, 
the grace to imitate what he was doing; 
grant us by his prayers that, 
as we offer the immaculate victim, 
we, too, may become a holocaust acceptable to you.

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*Officium S. Vincentii a Paulo, Congregationis Missionis fundatoris (Paris, 1741; Urbino, 1742, etc.); on 10 April 1741, Benedict XIV approved its use. Jean Richon, assistant of the Congregation, had probably prepared it. Although proper to the Congregation of the Mission, some French dioceses adopted this collect for their own use (such as Poitou, 1856, Saint-Flour, 1858). This same collect was also used for a time on 27 September for the feast of the “Depositio S. Vincentii a Paulo” [the Death of Saint Vincent de Paul], approved 15 June 1822. (See Missae Propriæ Congregationis Missionis et Societatis Puellarum a Caritate [Tours, 1949; Vatican City, 1961].)

* The Roman Missal adopted this prayer over the gifts after the Second Vatican Council for general usage.
Vincent celebrated a daily Eucharist, which he imitated in his sacrificial life. The Church prays that it may imitate his self-sacrifice.

Postcommunio

Caelestibus, Domine, refecti sacramentis:
quaesumus;
ut ad evangelizantem pauperibus Filium tuum imitandum
beati Vincentii sicut exemplis provocemur,
ita et patroniciis adjuvemur.

O Lord, as we have been refreshed by the heavenly sacraments, we beg you, that being moved by the examples of Blessed Vincent to imitate your son, evangelizing the poor, so we may be helped by his patronage.

In a significant improvement over the previous version (II), Vincent is proclaimed as imitating Jesus, the evangelizer of the poor. The Church prays that it may experience help from Vincent's patronage in heaven.

V(a). Feast of the Translation of the Relics of Saint Vincent (C.M. Proper, 1836)

Oratio

Deus, qui beatum Vincentium Confessorem Tuum,
ut tam multis hominum miseriis subveniret,
adorabiliis misericordiae munere decorasti:
concede propitius;
ut in Translationis ejus solemnniis
charitatem illam, quam ejus sacri cineres adhuc spirant,
felici aemulatione appetere,
ac de illius fructibus uberius participare mereamur.

O God, you adorned Blessed Vincent, your Confessor, with the gift of an admirable mercy to come to the aid of the great miseries of so many; graciously grant us, that on the solemnity of his Translation, we may desire to imitate happily that charity

10 The Roman Missal adopted this postcommunion prayer after Vatican II for general usage. What is perhaps an earlier form appears in Devotio Communis: In tua miseratione confisi suppliciter te deprecamur Domine, ut ad... Vincentii Patris nostrir, sicut... adjuvemur (p. 152). The usage of Lyons kept the expression "beati Vincentii Patris nostril."

11 Missae Propriae Congregationis Missionis (Tours), 1949. This feast, celebrated on the second Sunday after Easter, received papal approval 12 March 1836. On 15 December 1911 the date of celebration was changed to 26 April.
which his sacred remains still breathe forth, and may merit to share more fully in his fruits.

God granted mercy to the Confessor Vincent, whose effective mercy is still operative. The Church prays that, as it imitates his charity, it may attain heavenly rewards.

Secreta

Oblata, quaesumus Domine,
in Translatione beati Vincentii Confessoris tui dona propitius respice:
ut spiritus dilectionis tuae quo ipse indesinenter exarsit,
ejus meritis et intercessione,
 experiamur augmentum.

Look down favorably, we beg you, O Lord, on the gifts offered on the [feast of the] translation of Blessed Vincent, your Confessor, that we may experience, by his merits and intercession, an increase of the spirit of your love, with which he burned continually.

Vincent the Confessor burned continually with divine love. The Church prays for an increase of divine charity.

Postcommunio

Propitiae, Domine, famulis tuis:
et intercedente beato Vincentio Confessore tuo, concede:

Vincent de Paul, depicted in stained glass.
Image Collection of the Vincentian Studies Institute
ut perfectionis semitam, ab ipso tam suaviter propositam,
alcri semper gressu percurre re valeamus.

Be merciful to your servants, O Lord,
and grant by the intercession of Blessed Vincent, your Confessor,
that we might be strengthened to run with ever firmer step
in the way of perfection, which he so gently set forth.

Vincent the Confessor exemplified a way of perfection. The Church prays
for its own journey on the way to perfection.

V(b). Feast of the Translation of the Relics of Saint Vincent (Paris Proper)\(^\text{12}\)

Oratio

_Deus, qui beatum sacerdotem Vincentium,
  ut tam multis hominum miseriis subveniret, misericordiae visceribus
  implevisti;
  excita in Translatione corporis eius quam adhuc spirant sacri cineres
  caritatem,
  ipsiusque precibus eamdem in cordibus nostris benignus infunde._

O God, who filled the priest Blessed Vincent
with great mercy to come to the aid of so many human needs,
grant on the [feast of the] translation of his body,
that charity which his sacred remains still breathe forth;
and graciously pour out the same into our hearts in answer to his
prayers.

God granted Vincent, a priest, mercy to help others. His effective charity
still breathes forth, and the Church prays for the same charity.

Secreta

_Oblata munera in Translatione sancti Vincentii,
quaesumus, Domine, propitius suscipe;
eaque viscers caritatis quae beato sacerdoti tuo infundisti,
fac nos perpeti eius suffragio persentire._

O Lord, graciously accept, we pray, the gifts offered on
the [feast of the] translation of Saint Vincent;
may we always experience in answer to his prayers
the charity with which you filled your blessed priest.

\(^{12}\) This proper is undated. (Office de Saint Vincent de Paul [Tours], n.d.)
God endowed Vincent with great charity. The Church prays that it may experience today Vincent’s great charity. The meaning is nearly the same as the official text of 1949 (V[a]).

**Postcommunio**

Propitiate, Domine, populo tuo;
et intercedente beato Vincentio sacerdote,
perpetuae misericordiae afflictis omnibus impende subsidium

Be merciful to your people, O Lord,
and by the intercession of the priest, Blessed Vincent,
grant the reward of eternal mercy on all the afflicted.

The Church prays, through Vincent’s intercession, that all the afflicted may enjoy eternal happiness as a recompense for their sufferings. The text differs slightly from the official collect by simplifying it.

**VI. Patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, 20 December (1903)**

**Oratio**

Domine Jesu Christi, qui in corde beati Vincentii
ad omnigenas hominum aerumnas levandas
mirum caritatis ardorem accendere voluisti,
concede, ipso intercedente,
ut quicumque ejusdem patrocinio gloriamur,
quotidie in tua et proximorum dilectione crescamus.

Lord Jesus Christ, you wished to enkindle a wonderful fire of charity in the heart of Blessed Vincent, to come to the aid of all sorts of human ills;
grant through his intercession that all of us who glory in his patronage may grow daily in love for you and our neighbor.

This prayer is addressed to Jesus and not to God the Father – not a common style for Roman collects. Jesus granted the gift of charity to Vincent, who exercised it to alleviate human ills of all sorts. The Church prays for growth in affective and effective love.

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13 Missae Propriae Congregationis Missionis (Tours), 1949. This formulary was transferred to 27 September in the edition of the proper masses published in 1961. The notice of the founder’s being named “special patron before God of all societies of charity existing in the whole Catholic world, and which in any way stem from him,” by Leo XIII in 1885, was added to the Martyrology and Breviary in 1894. The texts for the feast were approved by Pius X, 7 September 1903.
Secreta

Suscipe quam tibi offerimus Domine
ad honorem beati Vincentii hostiam salutarem,
immensae tuae in homines pignus dilectionis.

Lord, accept the saving victim we offer you in honor of Blessed Vincent,
as a token of your great love for us.

This prayer is a generic collect.

Postcommunio

Salutaribus repleti mysteriis fac nos, quaesumus Domine,
ita famuli tui Vincentii caritatem aemulari,
ut ad caelestem mereamur gloriam pervenire.

Having been nourished by saving mysteries, we beg you, O Lord,
that by imitating the charity of your servant, Vincent,
we may merit the attainment of heaven’s glory.

Vincent was charitable. The Church prays that by imitating his charity it may be rewarded with heaven.

VII. All Vincentian Saints (1906, 1908)\textsuperscript{14}

Oratio

Deus, cuius essentia charitas,
per intercessionem beati Vincentii, sanctorumque omnium,
qui eo duce pauperum saluti se devoventes,
ad Te pervenire meruerunt:
da nobis famulis tuis,
ita eorum sequi oestigia,
ut assequamur et praemia.

O God, whose essence is charity,
by the intercession of blessed Vincent, and of all the saints

\textsuperscript{14} “The Commemoration of Saint Vincent de Paul and all His Holy Disciples and Daughters Whose Names Are Written in Heaven,” “Sacra Rituum Congregatio... Congregationis Missionis Concessionis et Approbationis Officii et Missae...” (Rome, n.d., but 1906); a second approval is dated 1908. This was intended as an All Saints Day for Vincentians and Daughters of Charity, as some other congregations had done for their members. It was to be celebrated on the Sunday within the octave of All Saints Day. Probably because of work on the new rubrics issued for the Roman Breviary under Pius X (“Divino Afflatu,” 1 November 1911), the feast was never formally inaugurated, nor was it noted in the deliberations of the general council, nor published officially in Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission.
who, under his leadership, devoted themselves to the salvation of the poor and merited to come to you, grant to us your servants that as we follow in their footsteps, we may also attain their rewards.

Vincent exercised leadership in charity. The Church prays that it may imitate the charity of Vincent and his followers in the salvation of the poor, and attain heavenly rewards.

**Secreta**

*Maiestati tuae, Domine, Agnum immaculatum offerentes:*

_quaesumus, ut corda nostra ignis ille charitatis accendat, quo beatus Vincentius sanctique filii eius in salutem flagrabant animarum._

As we offer to your majesty, O Lord, the spotless Lamb, we beg, that It might enkindle in our hearts the flame of charity with which blessed Vincent and his holy sons burned for the salvation of souls.

Vincent and his followers were inflamed with charity. The Church prays that it may have the same charity.

**Postcommunio**

*Caelesti alimonia satiati, da nobis quæsumus Domine, supereminentem Christi scientiam appetere: ut exemplo beati Vincentii sanctorumque filiorum eius, nil magis scire cupiamus nisi Iesum Christum et hunc Crucifixum._

As we are filled with heavenly food, grant us, we beg, O Lord, to long for the surpassing knowledge of Christ, so that, after the example of blessed Vincent and of his holy sons, we may desire nothing more than to know Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Vincent and his followers led Christ-centered lives. The Church prays, in words that echo the Pauline epistles and the *Common Rules*, that it may imitate their example.
VIII. Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation of the Mission, 25 January (C.M. Proper, 1973)\textsuperscript{15}

Oratio

Deus, humanae vocationis principium et corona,
qui beatum apostolum Paulum in sua conversione eligisti
ut nomen tuum portaret in mundum
et zelo beati Vincentii spiritalem familiam evangelizandis pauperibus
hodierna die providenti consilio suscitasti,
da nobis
vocatione qua nos vocasti in Ecclesia fideliter ambulare,
et, Aposcoli Gentium labores aemulantes
Evangelium veritatis et pacis nuntiare fidenter.

God, our Father, the beginning and the end of human vocation,
you chose Saint Paul the apostle at his conversion
to spread your name throughout the world.
On this day also you brought forth through the zeal of Saint Vincent
a spiritual family to preach the Gospel to the poor.
May we walk faithfully in the way of our vocation;
as we imitate the work of the Apostle of the Gentiles,
may we preach confidently the Gospel of truth and peace.

This prayer joins the two commemorations: of Paul the Apostle and the
founding of the Congregation. The prayer bears little resemblance to that used in
the Roman missal for the feast. The church acknowledges that God, the source of
vocation, called Paul, Vincent, and his spiritual family. Vincent was zealous, and
founded a family to preach the Gospel to the poor. The Church prays that it may
imitate Paul faithfully in preaching the Gospel.

IX. Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, 27 September (C.M. Proper, 1973)

Oratio

Deus, qui ad salutem pauperum et cleri institutionem
Beatam Vincentium presbyterum
apostolicis virtutibus imbuisti,
praesta, quaesumus,
et, qui eius sectamur documenta vitae,
ad Filii tui missionem perpetuandam in mundo
iugi caritate urgeamur.

Good and gracious God,
you filled the holy priest Vincent de Paul
with apostolic courage

\textsuperscript{15} Missae Propriae Congregationis Missionis et Societatis Puellarum a Caritate (Rome), 1973.
for the salvation of the poor
and the formation of the clergy.
May we who follow his example
be compelled by his constant charity
to continue the mission of your Son in the world.

This collect, currently in use, continues the form of emphasizing the two divine purposes of Vincent: the salvation of the poor and the formation of the clergy. It nicely connects them with the continuing mission of Jesus, a reference to the Congregation of the Mission. This collect was composed before the present Constitutions of 1984, which focused exclusively on Jesus, the evangelizer of the poor.

Secreta (Super oblata)

Deus, qui beato Vincentio divina celebranti mysteria
tribuisti quod tractabit imitari,
concede, ut, huius sacrificii virtute,
ipse quoque in oblationem tibi acceptabilem transeamus.

Loving God,
you helped the holy priest Vincent
to imitate what he celebrated in these mysteries.
By the power of this sacrifice
may we become an acceptable gift to you as well.

This collect was reworked from the text of the Vincentian proper of 1741 (IV), which emphasized the saint’s devotion to the Eucharist.

Postcommunio

Caelestibus, Domine, refecti sacramentis,
supplices deprecamur,
ut ad imitandum Filium tuum pauperibus evangelizantem
sicut exemplis beati Vincentii provocamur,
ita et patrocinis adiuvemur.

Loving God,
hear the prayers of those you have renewed
with your heavenly sacraments.
May the example and prayers of Saint Vincent
help us to imitate your Son
in preaching the good news to the poor.
Like the Prayer over the Gifts above, this collect is a reworking of the Vincentian proper of 1741 (IV). In this case, it continues the tradition, now fixed in the Constitutions of 1984, of Jesus the evangelizer of the poor.

C. Diocesan Propers

X. Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, (Lyons) 19 July

Oratio

_Deus, qui ad evangelizandum pauperibus
infirmorum miseras sublevandas,
et Ecclesiastici Ordinis decorem promovendum,
Beatum Vincentium à Paulo suscitasti:
concede,
 ut eadem semper tibi caritate et humilitate placeamus._

O God, to evangelize the poor
alleviate the miseries of the sick,
and promote the dignity of the clerical state
you raised up Blessed Vincent de Paul,
grant,
that we may ever please you by the same charity and humility.

This prayer reworks and simplifies the C.M. proper of 1729. It also uses his family name, contrary to Roman usage.

Secreta

_Nostrae servitutis hostiam, quaesumus, Domine, placitam tibi
esse concede,_

_qui durae captivitatis sacrificio beati Vincentii à Paulo sacerdotii
primordia consecrasti._

Grant, we beg, O Lord, that the sacrifice of our service might be pleasing to you,
who consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of Blessed Vincent de Paul
by the sacrifice of a harsh captivity.

__Missale Lugdunense__ (Lyons, 1771; in the style of Lyons, the feast was celebrated on 26 September, the closest date available to his death. These collects continued in use; as can be seen in _Dévotion à S. Vincent de Paul, Dans l’Église Métropolitaine de Lyon, où répose son Cœur; Avec des Méditations pour une Neuvaine en son honneur_ (Lyons: 1807). A note inside the cover of the copy in the archives of the Mission, Paris, says that this volume was composed for the reception of the heart of Saint Vincent in Lyons. The collects in the _Missale Lugdunense_, clearly based on previously written materials, were prepared locally for the proper usage of Lyons. The _Missale Vapincense_ [Gap] (19th century) adopted this same text, but left out “à Paulo.”

16
God used Vincent’s captivity to consecrate the beginnings of his priesthood. The Church prays that its service might be as acceptable as a sacrifice, like Vincent’s. This understanding of the effect of his captivity is unique to this prayer.

Postcommunio

Oblatis majestati tuae sacrificiis, quaesumus, Domine, plebs tibi devota gratuletur,
quia per beati Vincentii à Paulo presbyteri ministerium
verbvm vitae suscepit,
et providae ejus caritatis consolatione etiam num se sentit adjutam.

We beg, O Lord,
that the people devoted to you may rejoice in the sacrifices offered
to your majesty.
As they received the word of life from the ministry of the
priest, Blessed Vincent de Paul,
may they also rejoice in the consolation of his provident charity
when they feel the need of it.

Vincent exercised priesthood and provident charity. The Church prays
that it may experience joy in offering the sacrifice of the mass, and in Vincent’s
charitable help in time of need.

XI. Feast of Saint Vincent (Cahors), 19 July (1746)17

Oratio

Domine Deus, qui ut Cleri renovares splendorem
et meritis universis corporis et animae praebes auxilia,
humilem et apostolicum sacerdotem beatum Vincentium a Paulo suscitasti,
ejus meritis, et intercessione concede
ut eadem tibi charitate humiliter servientes in terra
cum ipso post mortem exaltati regnemus.

Lord God, to renew the splendor of the Clergy,
and, by your universal merits, to furnish help for body and soul,
you have raised up the humble and apostolic priest,
Blessed Vincent de Paul.
By his merits and intercession, grant
that by humbly serving you on earth with this same charity,
we may, raised up after death, reign with him.

17 Breviarium Cadurcense, 1746.
God had two divine purposes – the renewal of the clergy, and bodily and spiritual help for others. The priest Vincent was humble, apostolic, and charitable. The Church prays that it may imitate his charity and share his rewards.

XII(a). Feast of Saint Vincent (Paris, 1762?), 19 July

Secreta

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, propitius,
quas tibi offerimus hostias,
eoque domus tuae zelo nos accende
quo beati Vincentii sacerdotis tui cor inflamasti.

O Lord, we beg you to graciously receive the gifts we offer you, and to enkindle in us the same zeal for your house with which you inflamed the heart of your priest, Saint Vincent.

The prayer emphasizes Vincent’s zeal for the liturgy, a theme taken up in Secreta II. “Zeal for your house” is a citation from Ps 69:9.

Postcommunio

Nobis, quaesumus, Domine, amoris tui sacramentum refectis concede,
ut exemplo et intercessione beati Vincentii,
tibi indefessa caritate famulantes,
aeternam laborum nostrarum mercedem percipere mereamur.

O Lord, we beg you to grant to us, now fed with the sacrament of your love, that, through the example and the intercession of Saint Vincent, and serving you with tireless charity, we may deserve to receive the eternal reward of our works.

This prayer emphasizes Vincent’s tireless charity, and the Church prays that it may imitate this.

18 Taken from Missale Parisiense, 1762, but from an undated supplement. The Oratio is III. This missal offered only a set of commons “In Natali Presbyteri” (“On the birthday of a priest,” i.e., the annversary of his death, or birth into heaven).
XII(b). Feast of Saint Vincent (Paris, 1850)

Oratio

Deus, qui beatum sacerdotem Vincentium misericordiae visceribus implevisti;
quaesumus
ut quem pauperum patrem tua gratia effecisti,
benignum pro nobis intercessorem jugiter esse largiaris.

O God, who filled the blessed priest Vincent with a profound mercy,
we beg that,
as you made him the father of the poor by your grace,
you may likewise grant him to us as a kindly intercessor.

God granted mercy to the priest Vincent, who became father to the poor.
The Church prays that it may find in him an intercessor.

XIII. Feast of Saint Vincent (Toulouse), 19 July (1774)

Postcommunio

Per haec mysteria, quaesumus, Domine,
eum in nobis accende caritatis ardorem,
 quem sancto sacerdote tuo Vincentio
 pro salute animarum et pauperum levamine inspirati;
 ut digne vocatione nostra ambulantes,
 promissum bene operantibus mereamur praemium obtinere.

O Lord, we pray that through these mysteries,
you would enkindle within us, the fire of charity

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19 Offices Propres de l'église Paroissiale de Saint-Eustace à l'usage des fidèles, Avec renvoi au Paroissien de Paris pour l'office commun (Paris), 1850. This contrasts significantly with this sterile and godless prayer from the “Anniversary Mass for Vincent de Paule [sic], Fenelon, L'Épée, Franklin, Ganganelli, Monthyon, Liancourt, Belzunce, Hoche, Desaix, Laleuillade, and all those humanitarians who consecrated their lives for the good of humanity.” (A.-B. Saint-Esteve, Réforme Radicale. Nouvel Eucologe à l'usage de l'Eglise Catholique Française [Paris, 1834], 246.)

Oratio

Toi, qui rendis la charité si douce aux cœurs généreux,
et qui fis de la bienfaisance le plaisir le plus délicieux et le plus complet!
daigne approuver le souvenir qu'aujourd'hui nous consacrons aux Philanthropes auxquels tu donnes cette sagesse et cette bonté simple et touchante
qui les rendit si chers aux générations contemporaines,
et[le] leur mérita de vivre éternellement dans la mémoire des générations futures.

You, who have made charity so sweet in generous hearts,
and have made beneficence the most delicious and most complete pleasure,
deign to approve the memorial that we consecrate today to the humanitarians
to whom you have given this wisdom and this simple and touching goodness
which made them so dear to their own time,
and which merited for them to live eternally in the memory of future generations.

20 Taken from the Missale Tolosanum, 1774. The other prayers for the feast are Collect II, and Secreta IV.
that burned in your holy priest Vincent,
and that we would be moved to [work for] the salvation of souls
and the relief of the poor;
in this way, walking worthily of our vocation,
we will deserve to obtain the reward promised to those who
work for good.

The Church prays that it would be as charitable, both spiritually and
corporally, as Vincent de Paul was.

D. Private Collects
XIV. Collects for the Tercentenary (1960)\textsuperscript{21}

Oratio

\textit{Pater Omnipotens, cuius sapientia attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter,
et disponit omnia suaviter:}
eadem reple sapientia eos qui nostram curam agunt,
ut roborati spiritu consilii et fortitudinis
tute nos ducant in via arcta sed suavi
quam sequuntur electi.

 Almighty Father, whose wisdom reaches mightily from
end to end,
and which sweetly disposes all things,
fill with that same wisdom those who have care of us,
and strengthened in the spirit of counsel and strength,
may they safely lead us along the narrow but sweet way
followed by the elect.

The first of a series of prayers to the Trinity, for the superiors of the Congregation.
The role of superiors is regarded as guiding their inferiors in strict observance.

Oratio

\textit{Domine Iesu Christe, qui dixisti apostolis tuis:}
\textit{“Euntes docete omnes gentes”:
da fratribus nostris in disistas orbis partes profectis ut,
optabili suo munere digni, se ipsos sanctificantes,
ad exemplum sancti Patris nostri Vincentii,
evadant animarum venatores strenue.}

 Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles
“Go and teach all nations,”
grant to our brothers who have gone to distant parts of the world that,

\textsuperscript{21} “Aliquot Preces,” pp. 157-58. These were authorized by the Congregation for the use of its members.
being worthy of their desirable responsibility, they may be sanctified, following the example of our Father Vincent, and become mighty hunters of souls.

The second prayer to the Trinity for the sanctification of missionaries in distant lands (computed from Europe apparently).

**Oratio**

*Illuminator Spiritus, infunde nobis et omnibus fratribus vocationis nostrae gratiam et amorem, cum simplicitatis et humilitatis spiritu, atque mansuetudinis et mortificationis virtute, animarumque salutis studio; et concede ut Vincentii filii et numero et meritis augeantur, et quocumque eos miseris, ibi vigeat in clero disciplina, et in populo fides morumque sanctitas. Amen.*

O light-giving Spirit, fill us and all our brethren with the grace and love of our vocation, with the spirit of simplicity and humility, the virtue of meekness and mortification, and zeal for the salvation of souls. And grant that the sons of Vincent may increase in number and merits, and wherever you send them, may there flourish in that place discipline among the clergy and in the people faith and holiness of life. Amen.

The third prayer to the Trinity, begging the Holy Spirit for an increase in the “five virtues” of the Congregation, and good results from its traditional works of education of the clergy and evangelization. Even in 1959 there was no mention of the service of the poor among these works.

**Oratio**

*Gratiam tuam concede mihi, o Iesu, ut sim ad instar sancti Patris nostri Vincentii Deo iugiter intentus, cunctis affabilis, ac mihi semper constans: simplex, rectus, humilis: ab honoribus, divitis ac deliciis semper abhorrens, et cui nulla res placeat praeter quam in te, o Iesu.*

*V. Sancte Vincenti, spiritu Christi vivens, ora pro nobis: R. Ut et nos eodem spiritu vivere valeamus.*

Oremus. Excita, Domine, in Congregatione nostra...
Grant me your grace, O Jesus, to be, like our holy father Vincent, ever devoted to God, cheerful to all, and constant in myself: simple, upright, humble, ever rejecting honors, riches and comforts, and taking pleasure in nothing but you, O Jesus.

V/ Saint Vincent, living in the spirit of Christ, pray for us:
R/ That we may be strengthened to live in the same spirit.
Let us pray: O Lord, arouse in our Congregation...

A prayer for the interior spirit of Saint Vincent, begun in the first person and concluded with a versicle and response in the third person. The Vincentian ideal is traced in a few words.

XV. Collect of unknown origin

Oratio

Deus, qui ad animarum salutem, Beatum Vincentium Confessorem tuum, omnibus omnia factum esse voluisti,
concede propitius,
ut charitatis tuae dulcedine perfusi [=perfrui] ejus dirigentibus onitis,
ac suffragantibus meritis, aeterna gaudia consequamur.23

God, you wished that your Confessor, Blessed Vincent, become all things to all for the salvation of souls, grant, we beg, that we may be filled with the sweetness of your charity, and by his admonitions which direct us, and his merits which intercede for us, we may attain eternal joys.

God granted gifts to the Confessor Vincent. He exercised and exercises universal care for souls as teacher and intercessor. The Church prays that it may be charitable, and attain charity's eternal rewards.

XVI. Collect of unknown origin

Oratio

Deus humilium Celsitudo,
qui Beatum Vincentium Confessorem tuum Sanctorum
tuorum gloria sublimasti
tribue, quaesumus.

22 Taken from Devotio Communis. Collects XII, XIII and XIV were made part of a Little Office in honor of Saint Vincent. This office mixes approved collects, and others, with selections from psalms and hymns in his honor.
24 Devotio Communis, p. 160.
ut ejus meritis et intercessione
promissa humilibus praemia feliciter consequamur.

God, the height of the humble,
you raised Blessed Vincent your Confessor to the glory of your saints;
grant, we beg,
that by his merits and intercession
we may happily receive the rewards promised to the humble.

God exalted Vincent the Confessor, who because he was humble, is
now exalted. The Church prays that it may imitate Vincent's humility and attain
humility's eternal rewards.

XVII. Collect of unknown origin\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Oratio}

\textit{Deus, qui Beatum Vincentium Confessorem tuum}
\textit{evangelicae praedicationis gratia sublimasti}
\textit{tribue, quaesumus,}
\textit{eius nos semper et eruditione proficere}
\textit{et oratone defendi.}

God, you raised up Blessed Vincent, your Confessor,
by the grace of the preaching of the gospel;
grant, we pray,
that we may always be instructed by his teaching
and defended by his prayer.

God raised up Vincent the Confessor for gospel preaching. The Church prays
that it may be instructed and defended by him, as the ignorant were during his life.

XVIII. Collect of unknown origin\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Oratio}

\textit{Deus totius Consolationis, cuius miserationum non est numerus,}
\textit{qui Beatum Vincentium in patrem pauperum elegisti,}
\textit{concede, ut eius intercessione,}
\textit{gratiam misericordiae tuae consequamur.}

God of all consolation, whose mercy is limitless,
you chose Blessed Vincent as a father of the poor;
grant by his intercession that we may attain the favor of your mercy.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 165.
\textsuperscript{26}Regole Della Compagnia della Carità secondo l'istituto di S. Vincenzo de Paoli (Benevento, 1744), p. 118,
to conclude a novena in honor of the saint, composed for members of the Confraternity of Charity. Its
author is unknown.
God raised up Vincent as a father of the poor. The Church prays that it may be shown mercy through Vincent’s intercession, as the poor received mercy from him during his earthly life.

E. From the Ritual of Blessings

XIX. Blessing of the Water of Saint Vincent for the Sick (1882)27

Oratio

Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeterne Deus,
qui benedictionis tuae gratiam aegris infundendo corporibus,
facturam tuam multiplici pietate custodis,
ad invocationem sanctissimi nominis tui benignus assiste;
ut, intercedente beato Vincentio Confessore tuo,
famulos tuos ab aegritudine liberatos
et sanitate donatos dextera tua erigas,
virtute confirmes, potestate tuearis,
atque Ecclesiae tuae sanctae cum omni prosperitate restituas.

Holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God,
by pouring out the grace of your blessing on the bodies of the sick,
you preserve your creature by your manifold love;
help us in your mercy as we invoke your most holy name,
that, by the intercession of blessed Vincent your Confessor,
you would lift up by the power of your right hand
and return to health your servants freed from illness,
strengthen them by your power, shield them by your might,
and return them to your holy Church in all well-being.

This is a generic prayer having nothing specific to say about Saint Vincent, apart from mentioning his name.


XX. Collect

Merciful God,
whose servant Vincent de Paul,

27 Vade Mecum (Mechlin, 1927), p. 49. (Approved for the Congregation of the Mission, 16 March 1882, by Leo XIII.) This same text is found in L’Eau Bénite de Saint Vincent de Paul Pour les Infirmes (Paris, n.d.).

28 For 27 September. Source: Common Worship. Collects and Post Communions, http://www.cofe.anglican.org/liturgy/commonworship/texts/collects/contemp/september.html (accessed 3 May 2006). The text was developed by The European Province of the Society of Saint Francis, an Anglican religious order. Another version, in traditional language, was also prepared: “O merciful God, whose servant Vincent de Paul, by his ministry of preaching and pastoral care, brought thy love to the sick and the poor; grant to all thy people a heart of compassion, that by serving the needs of others they may serve thee in word and deed.”
by his ministry of preaching and pastoral care,
brought your love to the sick and the poor:
give to all your people a heart of compassion
that by word and action they may serve you in serving
others in their need.

This composition weaves together two strands of Vincent's mission work
("preaching") and alludes to his founding of the Confraternities of Charity at the
conclusion of the missions ("pastoral care"). The emphasis here is not, however, on
his mission to the clergy nor the centrality of the imitation of Jesus.

Summary and Conclusion

What the Church believes about Saint Vincent, lex credendi, shows a shift
in emphasis from the earliest official collects to the present. The earliest collect (II)
mentioned three divine purposes or goals, probably as these were known from the
biographies of Blessed Vincent: evangelization of the poor, care for the abandoned
and the sick, and care for the clergy. These three goals, however, did not follow the
enumeration as given in the Common Rules: personal perfection, evangelizing the
poor country people, and education of the clergy. The collect published at the time
of his canonization (III) reduced the number of goals to two: to evangelize the poor
and care for the clergy. The proper Vincentian collect (IV) also presents two divine
purposes, but changes the perspective slightly: the salvation of the poor and the
education of the clergy, to be accomplished through a new family in the Church
(the Congregation of the Mission). The same two goals were presented in one of
the diocesan collects (XI), but with the focus reversed: renewal of the clergy comes
first, and then bodily and spiritual help for others, presumably for the poor, since
they needed this help. The most modern collects (VIII, IX) emphasize the single
goal of preaching the Gospel to the poor, and have nothing to say about the clergy.
This shift from three goals to one also parallels the development undertaken in
the Congregation of the Mission. It shows, however, that the Congregation, in the Church, was not always so clear about its purposes.

Throughout the collects, Vincent de Paul is called servant, priest, and confessor, the traditional category. These prayers also emphasize his affective and effective charity. They point to his apostolic, external, qualities, that is, his virtues (humility, zeal, charity), and to his personal piety (such as love for the liturgy, daily celebration of the Eucharist, and focus on the words and deeds of Jesus as the evangelizer of the poor). Only one collect mentions his captivity.

For the Church at prayer, the result sought in these collects generally involves, in one way or another, imitation of Vincent’s love for God and charity to the neighbor, and an experience of Vincent’s intercession, leading to eternal happiness.

The relative conciseness and sobriety of the Roman collect preclude lengthy development in them of the attributes of God and the saints. Yet, as can easily be seen, some of the collects were lengthy. A few exhibited somewhat farfetched ideas (secreta, IX), or were even ugly in the original Latin (postcommunio, II). The two collects in most general use, in the Roman Missal and the proper for the Congregation of the Mission, are, however, models of the classic style. To be noted, as well, is the expression which anticipates the adoption of the formula in chapter one of the 1984 Constitutions: “to follow Christ evangelizing the poor” (evangelizantem pauperibus Filium tuum), in the postcommunion, IV.

It is hoped that this collection of prayers might lead to a deeper understanding of Vincent de Paul as the Church presents him in its prayer, and to a wider choice of prayers in his honor, at least for informal use. Perhaps, too, this material might spur others to develop creative energies in this same direction.29

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29 Another example, recently uncovered, in a new composition would follow VII (see page 27). It reads:

**VII. All Vincentian Saints (1913)**

**Oratio (2)**

_Domine Jesu, qui Vincentii familiam congregasti,_

_et cordum unitate florescere voluisti,_

_da quaesumus,_

_it triumphantium fratrum virtutes imitemur,_

_et in Te cum eis in unum consummari mereamur._

Lord Jesus, who assembled the family of Vincent and willed that it flourish in the union of hearts,

grant, we beseech you,

that we may imitate the virtues of our confreres in their heavenly triumph,

and deserve to be consumed in you together with them.

An alternate version of the first collect, the second collect is here addressed to the Lord Jesus, and can be found in Noël-Vérán (Natalis Verani) Aubry, _Manuale Christianorum_, 7th ed. (Mechlin, 1913), p. 158.