

Stannies Family VINCENTIAN VOICE



Fr Peter Reedy CM
Stannies Resident Chaplain

Fr Bob Maloney a former Superior General of the Vincentians, recently wrote a reflection on St Vincent's response to the pandemic that Vincent knew in his own lifetime. He writes that St Vincent was no stranger to pandemics. On perhaps no other topic were his emotions so deeply stirred. Outbursts of the plague ravaged Europe frequently during his active years, taking the lives of many whom he loved. In his letters and talks, Vincent mentioned the plague more than 300 times. He sent lengthy letters offering practical advice about helping plague victims.

In his talks, he described the plague in France, Algiers, Tunis, Poland and throughout Italy. The dimensions were staggering. France alone lost almost a million people to the plague in the epidemic of 1628-31. In roughly the same period in Italy, 280,000 died.

In 1654, 150,000 inhabitants of Naples succumbed. Algiers lost about 40,000 people in 1620-21 and again in 1654-57. Genoa was among the hardest hit. Half the city died in 1657.

In 1657, on top of hearing that three priests had died on their way to Madagascar, Vincent received news that six members of the house in Genoa had succumbed to the plague.

He described himself as "overwhelmed with sorrow" and added that he "could not receive a greater blow without being completely crushed by it."

Even though Vincent was profoundly affected by the losses caused by the plague, he did not abandon his faith in God. He did not see it as a punishment from God. Rather, he saw his troubling time as an opportunity to care for others.

He not only prayed for others but was steadfast in his commitment to care for the most needy. In doing so he was aware that people who care for others and especially the needy are making God's love

for humanity real and alive. His care for others strengthened his awareness of the presence and goodness of God.

Many in our Stannies community are facing new challenges with social distancing, schooling at home, isolation from mates and extended family. We are learning and trying to learn new ways of being with each other. Many have lost jobs and we all do not know what lies ahead. This is on top of the effects of a terrible drought and the summer bushfires.

In the spirit of St Vincent, we can use these challenging times to care for each other and to reach out in appropriate, safe ways to others in our Stannies community and beyond.

St Vincent provides us with a model of how to respond to challenging times.



Saint Vincent de Paul