



FINDING DIRECTION

Sr Joyce Rupp tells a story about encountering a tiny snapping turtle in the middle of a walking path. She realised that the turtle had recently hatched and was trying to find its way to the water. She picked it up and carried it to the water. An amazing thing took place as she set the turtle down on the sand. At first the hatchling pulled its head and feet in tightly. Then the head slowly came out and pulled upward, as if sniffing the air. The turtle wasn't looking at the water but she soon realized it was actually getting a whiff of the moistness. It sat there for a minute with a puzzled look, then turned toward the water and moved as fast as its tiny feet would go. Into the lake it slipped, quickly out of view. If turtles have an experience of ecstasy that probably best describes the moment it dashed into the water. She loved seeing what happened when that little creature recognized "home."

This reflection calls to mind the idea of finding where we belong. The turtle sensed the right direction and then found its 'home'. It may not be so easy for us and yet we have something to learn.

How often do we stop and think about the direction we are going in?

How quickly do we move towards that which brings the greatest sense of peace and well-being?

St Vincent found his true path when he was in his mid-thirties, serving the poor and helping others to do so to. As is the way of life directions this one decision needed to be continually supported by other decisions. Vincent sent some of his priests to Madagascar as missionaries, however the first few that he sent died either on the way or once they got there and there were questions about the viability of the mission. Vincent's response was:

...it would be a fine Company of the Mission if, because five or six had died, it were to abandon the Lord's work! What a cowardly Company, attached to flesh and blood! Oh, no! I don't think there's a single member of the Company who has such little courage, or who isn't ready to go to take the place of those who have died. I don't doubt that nature may tremble a little at first, but the spirit, which has the upper hand, says, 'I'm willing; God has given me the desire to go; no, this loss can't make me abandon my resolution.¹

Vincent was not afraid to make the hard decisions and do what needed to be done in order to achieve his goals and follow the path he was on. He also said: Grace has its moments. Let us abandon ourselves to the Providence of God and be on our guard against anticipating it. If Our Lord is pleased to give me any consolation in our vocation, it is this: I think it seems to me that we have tried to follow Divine Providence in all things and to put our feet only in the place it has marked out for us.²

How challenging is it for us to make the difficult decisions that are necessary at times?