

# SVP and Westminster Cathedral: A Special Relationship

Jahnel Marseglia, Year 6



**At St Vincent de Paul School, we are very fortunate to be the parish school of Westminster Cathedral. There are a number of special events that happen throughout the year because of our partnership. In the season of Advent, the School performs our Nativity Play in the Cathedral [see 14 December in the Diary pages – Ed.]. Nursery Class dress as stars, Reception as shepherds and sheep, Year 1 as Wise Men and Year 2 as Angels. Key Stage 2 perform as Chamber Choir and School Choir and some children are chosen as narrators.**

We often see Fr Vincent in the Cathedral celebrating Mass, when we have Holy Days of Obligation and when Year 3 children receive their First Holy Communion (we walk the short distance from our school, which is only just next door!). This term in Religious Education in Year 6, one of our topics is 'Vocations and Commitment'. As School Chaplain, Fr Vincent Mbu'i visits the school every week. For this topic, he came to our class and spoke to us about his training and vocation to the priesthood. It was extremely interesting and we learnt so much.

First of all he spoke to us about his calling from God to become a priest and what had inspired him. We learned that some young seminarians from a seminary near the village where he lived fascinated him. He thought that the men seemed very blessed and he wanted to feel the same sort of contentment. He even pretended to be a priest when he was younger!

During his 11 years of training he studied Theology – The science of God (we learnt that 'theos' means God and 'logos' means science of), Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology – we were impressed by these extensive studies and knowledge of Fr Vincent. His school was called a seminary, and in his time there he was taught about six important aspects of his role as a priest: academic, emotional, spiritual, social, communication and morality.

He also told us about how, during a priest's ordination, the Ordinand (the name used when a priest is about to be ordained) must take three vows:

- Obedience – Promising to following the will of God,
- Chastity – Promising not to get married, and always to be faithful to God the Father,
- Poverty – Promising to live a simple life and sharing everything with others, and knowing that you can depend on God for all that you need.

Priests receive a small stipend (an amount of money) each month, and cannot receive any gifts that cannot be shared equally. All of them have to spend some time in silence to connect with God. This time is called a 'retreat'. During their long period of quiet, they spend time praying to God and reflecting. Fr Vincent talked to us about having to be able to control his emotions in different situations, and how he has to be able to be contemplatively listening all the time (which means listening with the third ear and being able to decipher all the emotions that his parishioners may be experiencing).

In his time with us, he taught us so much about vocations and was able to answer so many questions. We asked him challenging questions that enabled us to have a better understanding of what it means to answer God's call and this also helps us to deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Catholic. I look forward to seeing Fr Vincent on his next visit and I have many more questions to ask.