

Contents

What is Vinnies Youth?	3
What can our school get involved with?	4
The St Vincent de Paul Society – a youth revolution	5
Our Logo	7
How to start a Vinnies Youth group in your school	8
See, Think, Do	9
The initial meeting and office bearer's roles	10
The second meeting	11
The President	13
Tips for the President	14
The Vice President	15
The Secretary	16
Tips for the Secretary	17
The Treasurer	18
The Spiritual Advisor	19
Commissioning ceremony	20
Learning and having fun	21
Fundraising and raising awareness	22
Our history	23
Reflections	25
Mission and vision	31
Contactus	37



Vinnies Youth are funded and supported by the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand.

What is a Vinnies Youth group?

A Vinnies Youth group is a structured and active body of students and teachers within a school community who aim to make a difference to those who are poor, disadvantaged and marginalised.

This group of students, with the guidance of staff meet to discuss and organise ways to help others in need within their own school community and beyond.

Organising a Vinnies Youth group is a great introduction to the St Vincent de Paul Society and experiencing its ethos.

It is also a great opportunity for students to put their social justice faith in action and actively coordinate volunteer driven projects, events and initiatives that improve their community.

Mission statement

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

Vision statement

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering a "hand up" to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.



What sorts of activities can our school get involved with?



Volunteer at a local Vinnies Shop



Food drives



Learn about community social issues



Street and beach cleanups



Make cards for the elderly



Visit Hospice and Care Homes



Cook meals for others in the community



Winter Clothing Appeals

A youth revolution

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in 1833 by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a 20 year old law student at the Sorbonne University. Responding to the great poverty in the Paris of his day, he and a group of friends began visiting the poor in their homes, bringing food and firewood

Soon they formed a Society to sustain them in this person to person work and named it after the great apostle of charity, Saint Vincent de Paul.

Today the St Vincent de Paul Society operates in 147 countries and has over one million members and volunteers who help make a difference.

Groups called Conferences, coming from the French language meaning 'coming together to meet', carry out

the major works of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Conferences work hard in the Spirit of Frédéric Ozanam to help make a difference in their community. Many Catholic schools today have Conferences operating.

Students from across all years come together in the name of social justice to reach out to those in need.

BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM HAD TWO KEY FOCUSES:

Charity — Providing assistance to individuals and families on person to person basis.

Social Justice — Questioning the structures that create poverty and disadvantage.

"Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice's role to prevent the attack."

- Frédéric Ozanam



The Society throughout the world

Within two years of the first Conference meeting, the Society had over 100 members. Soon, the Society had spread beyond the borders of France, and there was a Conference in Italy by 1842.

Conferences of the Society were then established in other countries in the following years:

1843 - Belgium, Scotland, Ireland

1844 - England

1846 – Holland, Germany, Greece, Turkey, the USA and Mexico

1847 - Canada, Switzerland

1850 – Austria, Spain

1854 - Australia

1867 - New Zealand

By the time of Frédéric's death in 1853, the Society was thriving in

France and had spread throughout the world, fulfilling Frédéric's desire to "embrace the whole world in a network of charity".

Today, the Society is present in over 150 countries, with 800,000 members and over 1 million volunteers

The international logo

'To serve in hope.'

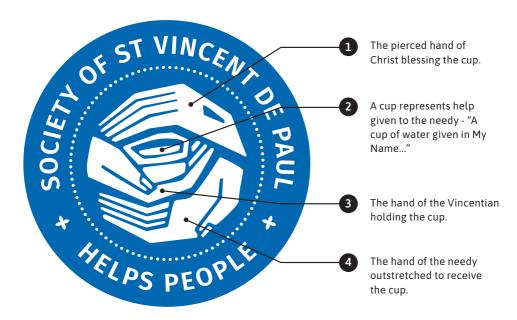
The fish is the symbol of Christianity. The eye is the eye of God, watching over us and those we assist. The circle of the logo represents the unity of our international organisation. The words 'serviens in spe' usually accompany the logo. It means:



Our logo

The logomark for the Society in New Zealand was created by Australian sculpture artist, Tom Bass. It symbolises the presence of Jesus Christ in the work of the Society.

In New Zealand the motto of the Society is "Society of St Vincent de Paul Helps People". It surrounds a badge that consists of four elements.



The hands

The cup can be interpreted as a gift, which means that everything given by SVDP to those in need is a gift. These gifts includes time, friendship, material goods, a cup of coffee or a bed for the night.

God's blessing on the work of the Society is central to our mission and it enables us to keep helping people.

How to start a Vinnies Youth group

1 Teacher

Choose a teacher or staff member from your school to support your group. This person will liaise between your group and outside staff. They can also act as a go-between for the group and the Society.

2 Talk

To initiate interest at your school in forming a Vinnies Youth group arrange for a Youth Facilitator and/or a member from the local Conference to come to your school and talk about the Society.

3 What next?

During the week following the first discussions make a list of the names of people interested in forming a group. Once you have a group of interested people you need to advise your:

- Principal
- · APRE/Religion Teacher/Campus Minister
- · Youth Representative from SVDP and;
- · Local Conference President.

It is now time to arrange the initial meeting.



The actions of a Vinnies Youth group generally involve a three step process*:

SEE

To provide a 'hand up' to those in need requires us to see and become aware of issues of social injustice.

THINK

Think about the social injustices in your community and how they might be alleviated.

DO

Put the seeing and thinking into action by helping people experiencing this injustice.

*Joseph Cardijn was the founder of Young Christian Workers. He developed the "See Judge Act" method during his work with the YCW movement.

The "See Think Do" method outlined above has been derived from the "See Judge Act" method and we would like to acknowledge that the idea was based on Cardijn's method.

The initial meetings and roles

Preparation

Arrange the time, date and room for the meeting and make sure everyone knows the details. Put a poster on the noticeboard or a note in the daily notices.

You may choose to invite a representative from SVDP Youth or a member from the local Conference.

It is also recommended that you have some ideas ready on potential activities the group can be involved in.

First Meeting

Open the meeting with either a prayer or a reflection.

Vote for your Office Bearers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Communications Officer

The Youth coordinator will talk about their role and how they will support the group. Allow the SVDP representative to briefly address the meeting. Decide on the frequency of meetings, contact details and what activities are going to be looked into or undertaken.

Close the meeting with a prayer.

Roles

If possible share the following brief description of roles with people prior to or at the first meeting:

President

The President is the leader of the group. The President conducts the meeting, controls the activities, allocates work to various members and maintains close contact with the Teacher involved, the Vinnies Youth representative and the local Conference.

Vice President

Is supportive of the President and is required to chair meetings in the absence of the President.

Secretary

Is responsible for any incoming or outgoing letters, records the minutes and keeps a record of members.

Treasurer

Keeps a record of income and expenditure. Some schools have their own bank accounts. If this is the case, the Treasurer is one of the signatories, another may be the President, Teacher or the Secretary. Always ensure that there are more than two signatories.



Visit www.vinniesyouth.org.nz to download posters and starter sessions resources!



Roles cont ...

Communications Officer

Is the link between staff and students. Supports the group from the "sideline". They are enthusiastic and supportive. They assist the group in the running of their activities; attends meetings; and publicises the work for the group. The Communications Officer also assists with the "passing over" of the group from one year level to another.

Recruitment

It is always good to get some students from the next year's group involved just prior to the passing over of the group. This gives them some experience "first hand".

Second Meeting

The agenda for the meeting may look something like this:

Opening Prayer

A meeting should always open with a prayer.

Spiritual reading/reflection

This is a reading or reflection prepared by someone in your group. It may consist of a scripture reading, a poem, a newspaper article, a piece of music etc.

Activities

Discuss the outcome of the activities (in the Vice President's full role description on page 16 there is more detail on finding activities for the group). It is a good idea to prepare a calendar of activities with details on how many people are required for each activity. This can then be circulated amongst the group and school community.

Remember: Interesting and innovative projects attract more members.

It is a good idea to make a list of what you can do as a group and what additional support you will need. You may want to think of the following:

1. What are we trying to achieve?

List your objectives, how you see it working and what needs to be considered.

2. Who do we need to inform?

Apart from your Coordinator, who needs to know about this? Consider your cause and whether informing more people will help it succeed. Think about local newspapers, Council representatives and the wider school community.



3. Can we do this on our own?

Think about your timeframes and take into account your study schedule and extracurricular activities. You may need to reassess or seek additional help from your school peers, local Conference or SVDP staff.

4. Have we planned it appropriately?

Make sure that you have considered all aspects of the initiative both in planning and implementation. If you need assistance with a task it is always a good idea to ask for help!



Handy Hints

At the second meeting you should hand out a more detailed description of each office-bearing role to the elected people. In the President's description there is more detail on how to plan and run a meeting.

Remember...

- · Keep in regular touch with your Youth Coordinator and the local Conference.
- · Make sure everyone knows when and where your meetings are.
- The meeting should be interesting, enjoyable and go no longer than necessary.
- · There should be time and occasions for purely social activities.

Contact your local Youth Coordinator be emailing youth@svdp.org.nz

If you need to recruit more members try the following activities:

- · Posters around your school
- · Talking at assemblies
- · Ensure meetings are enjoyable

· Personally approach individuals you think may like to join.



The President



Role Description

The primary responsibility of the President is to look after the internal life of the group.

Any well organised group needs to give priority not only to its activities, but also to the quality of the relations of the group members.

The enthusiasm and commitment of members can often depend on the quality of support they get from others in the group.

The President...

- · Is a person who can gather people
- Is passionate about leading others to make a positive difference to our world
- Strives to make the members feel welcome and involved
- Is aware of the members' concerns and feelings
- · Develops a sense of unity in the group
- Creates a friendly and suitable meeting environment.

Promotes sharing and fellowship

- Encourages participation from everyone
- Draws out the opinions of quiet members
- Organises activities to help members get to know one another
- Develops the enthusiasm and commitment of members

 Raises awareness of the needs of the poor and suffering

Has concern for the wellbeing of members

- Seeks to find out the needs and concerns of members.
- Arranges to make sure all members can be involved (e.g. transport)
- Follows up on members who have missed a meeting or who have "dropped off".

Facilitates communication within the group

- Talks regularly with the Teacher and/ or other involved staff members
- Conducts meetings, and ensures that they are organised and interesting
- Ensures that all group members know of the group's activities
- \cdot Helps to resolve conflict
- Values the sharing of faith and facilitates that.



The President - Tips



A good group meeting needs to be...

ORGANISED: You need to arrive with an agenda. This may be worked out with the rest of the leadership team, which consists of the other Office Bearers and members of staff

INTERESTING: You need to keep the meeting moving and not get stuck on one topic for too long.

INFORMATIVE: You need to allow ideas to come from the group, and to encourage an exchange of views and draw out quiet members.

DECISIVE: Decisions need to be made. and the SVDP way is for the President to seek consensus. If this does not seem possible, the issue might have to be left for discussion at a following meeting.

SUPPORTIVE: Members meet as friends and the President needs to encourage this spirit by listening, supporting and being concerned

A suggestion for planning a meeting is provided in the table below.

After the meeting...

ACTION SHEET: Who is responsible for what action? When? How will we know it is complete?

Suggestion

Take a few minutes to think of meetings you have attended. What did the leader do that worked well? What in particular did not work?

Write it down first. then set a time for the group to share. What do you want to trv as President of your group to help it run smoothly?

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIME

Welcome: opening prayer and spiritual discussion		
· Minutes and issues arising		
· Treasurer's report		
Review of visits: What happened? How was it? What next?		
· General business		
· Closing prayers		

ITEM TO BE DISCUSSED

The Vice President



Role Description

The Vice President has two responsibilities, one which must be attended to regularly, the other occasionally.

The main task of the Vice President is to make sure the group is constantly reaching outside itself and responding to the needs of its community.

Since there are endless opportunities for involvement by a Vinnies Youth group, the Vice President ensures that the group is expanding its understanding of the needs of the community around it.

The Vice President must also make sure that there are sufficient activities available to meaningfully occupy the time and energy of its members.

The Vice President also stands in for the President when the President is unavailable.

The Vice President...

- Is a person who is active and outreaching
- Has a strong desire to build a better world
- · Is self motivated and active
- Is concerned about people in need and finding ways to respond
- · Can lead the group in reaching out.

Coordinates the groups mission action

- Considers the strength of the group's members and how they can best help out
- Encourages experimentation with new areas of mission action
- Organises visits, ensuring the group members have support for their work
- Makes sure that any follow up to visits or activities is carried out.

Organises special events and invites new members

- Considers ways to attract new members to the group
- Seeks out people who will assist the group although they are not members
- Coordinates the organisation of any training events and guest speakers
- · Looks after the hospitality for visitors.

Helps encourage the group to be a witnessing community

- Looks after publicising the activities of the group in the school
- Encourages the group to see their work as an expression of being a Christian
- Works with the Spiritual Advisor in organising appropriate activities for the faith development of the members.

The Secretary



Role Description

The responsibility of the Secretary is to keep records of the activities of the group, and to connect the group with the wider community, other sections of SVDP and the Church.

The Secretary needs to feel comfortable talking and liaising with strangers.

The Secretary will need to have a good understanding of what the Vinnies Youth group is working towards so that he or she can communicate this to others.

The Secretary...

- Looks after the tradition and history of the group
- Keeps minutes as a record of the group's activities
- Is able to remind the group of decisions and activities requiring follow up
- Records phone numbers and addresses of members, volunteers and contacts
- Keeps copies of information on the Society's history.

Maintains contact with other groups

- Responds to correspondence from nursing homes, hospitals etc visited
- Arranges members to attend functions where appropriate
- · Is aware of upcoming events.

Coordinate involvement with the wider St Vincent de Paul Society

- Responds to any correspondence from other SVDP groups
- Stays aware of the dates of wider SVDP activities
- Keeps in contact with nearby groups and arranges activities
- Maintains contact with the Regional Council

Maintains contact with SVDP activities

- Arranges members to attend functions when appropriate
- · Is aware of upcoming events
- Gets to know support people such as Youth Representative and other young members of SVDP.



The Secretary - Tips



Suggestions for keeping Minutes

Look at the table that has been suggestedfor use by the President at meetings. It can be valuable to keep minutes organised by what part of the meeting they occur in - see example in the table below.

Suggestions for keeping track of decisions

Remember the most important information to record is to note when a decision has been made. You may find highlighting will assist you in finding that point at a later time.

When recording a decision please remember to include the following:

- ACTIVITY: What is the activity, event or situation that happened
- BY WHOM: Who is the person/s that are to do it
- BY WHEN: When is the action to happen, or the consequence of the decision to take place
- · How will we know when activity is done
- · When and how will the people report.

SAMPLE MEETING MINUTES		
Present:	Sadie, John, Rachel, Liam	
Welcome:	Meeting opened at 12:30pm, 32 members were welcomed, and we introduced ourselves.	
Prayer & Discussion:	Prayer. Sadie read from Acts of the Apostles Ch. 3, and we all discussed the way a group attracts new members.	
Minutes and Issues:	Minutes were read. A number of things still needed follow up, so the President noted these down for general business. Tom noted that the date of the car wash should have been Saturday the 16th, not Saturday the 15th. Minutes were amended. Members noted that they had done their jobs.	
Correspondence:	Lots of mail, but the Secretary had read it all through beforehand, and noted only the important and relevant issues.	
Treasurer's Report:	The Treasurer told us the great news that we still have money.	
Review of Visits:	Each of the members told of their visits, both the success and difficult points. The group decided together what the next big step would be for each of the activities. It was a useful exercise, and we all found it rewarding.	
General Business:	The President pushed quickly through all the extra bits of business: sharing information, discussing problems and helping us make decisions. We closed with prayers at 12:45pm.	

The Treasurer



Role Description

The role of the Treasurer is to record all of the money received and paid out by the group.

This ensures the group is accountable for its use of money. It also ensures that the group has records of what its projects have cost so that it is able to plan for the future.

The Treasurer also takes responsibility for coordinating fundraising activities.

Petty Cash Log



To help keep track of the groups finances keep a cash log and use it to record the income and expenses of the group.



Template available for download at vinniesyouth.org.nz

The Treasurer...

- Is a person who is good with figures and is trustworthy
- Needs to be able to keep accurate financial records
- Is able to predict (with the help of your Teacher) how much various activities are likely to cost
- Must always report back to group on their financial situation.

Keeps records of financial transactions

- Receives bank statements and checks these against the records
- At the end of the year, gives the staff member all statements.

Helps arrange fundraising activities

- Research fundraising options and suggests these to the group
- · Keep it simple and make it fun.

Makes sure that the groups money is used well

- Suggests worthwhile projects for the money to be used on or donated to.
- Considers particularly other Society projects that need funds.
- Arranges for any excess money to be passed on to the local SVDP Regional Council.

The Spiritual Advisor



Role Description

The Spiritual Advisor is normally the Teacher who is the staff contact for the group. However this role can also be taken on by a student or by an outside person with some experience.

The Spiritual Advisor's responsibility is the Christian formation of the members.

This involves coordinating the spiritual discussion time at the start of the meeting, and arranging other opportunities for development in spirituality and ministry.

The Spiritual Advisor does not provide all these personally, he or she assists the group as a whole to organise events suited to its needs.

The Spiritual Advisor...

- · Is a guiding and supportive person
- Believes prayer and reflection is valuable
- Encourages and supports members in their personal growth and faith development
- Recognises the link between the work of the group and Christian faith is knowledgeable and shares this knowledge with the group.

Coordinates activities for the group's formation and training

- Gets the support to discuss and suggest its needs
- Proposes events for the group's approval
- · Organises events or guest speakers

The Spiritual Advisor

- Arranges and coordinates formation events
- Arranges retreats, forums, workshops and other faith development activities
- Coordinates publicity to let all relevant people know about organised events
- Links the group in with events run by others, particularly wider SVDP events.

A note from Trédéric

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam wrote in a letter to Fr Pendola, 19 July 1853:

"There is a useful method for strengthening hearts which lack courage. This is to give them the privilege of seeing the poor, of being shown Our Lord Jesus Christ not only in holy pictures painted by great artists but of being shown Jesus Christ and his wounds in the person of the point. These people of noblemen must learn what it means to be hungry, thirsty and poor. to live in a place without clothing or furniture. They must be able to see dire poverty in the guise of sick children, of children who are weeping. They must be able to see them and to love them."

Commissioning ceremony

A good way to launch your group is with a commissioning ceremony.

At a commissioning ceremony, new members (including new Office Bearers) are officially inducted into your conference. Members may wish to write a pledge for what they hope to achieve and read it to the group. At the ceremony, it is recommended that someone speak about the St Vincent de Paul Society mission and vision, and congratulate the members for getting involved.

The purpose of a commissioning ceremony is that it is a public acknowledgement for the people involved in your conference and a 'sending forth' of the members of the conference to help others.

You may have a commissioning ceremony at the start of each year, to welcome members who have joined the conference and to launch the group's activities for another year.

Your commissioning ceremony may take place at a parish Mass (if the conference is near a parish), during school assembly or simply in a classroom during lunch time.

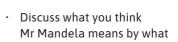
QUICK ACTIVITY

What is Poverty and Social Exclusion? Read the following passage by Nelson Mandela:

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.

While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.



- Research the two elements of poverty: Absolute Poverty and Relative Poverty.
- Give examples of this in New Zealand.

he stated.

 Research social exclusion and discuss and reflect on your feelings.

Learning and having fun



Learning

It is important to learn about the history and works of the St Vincent de Paul Society, both locally and at an international level.

The students may want to read about the founders of the Society, or a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society Youth Team can give a presentation about how the Society began.

A local St Vincent de Paul Society Conference member could talk to the group about when and where the Conference meets, what the needs are in their region and the ways in which the Conference helps local people.

The group could also visit some different places to learn about how SVDP works in their Diocese, such as the warehouse where all the donated clothes are sorted and distributed or a local SVDP shop or support centre.

Having fun

As well as helping young people to develop leadership skills, learn about issues in their community and discover their ability to make a difference in the world, Vinnies Youth groups can be a great way to make new friends and have some fun.

As well as providing time in meetings for the members to talk and get to know each other better, it is good to have some social activities within your group.

A shared lunch or morning tea at the start or end of each season is a good way to celebrate the work the group has done and to give the students an opportunity to get to know each other better. This will help them to work more closely as a team.

This fun, social element of Vinnies Youth groups makes it more enjoyable and interesting for the members who are involved.



Fundraising and raising awareness



Fundraising

There is no obligation to raise money or an expectation that a group will send money to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Some groups may be able to do lots of fundraising but little community service, while others might be able to do lots of service activities but little in the way of fundraising.

Sometimes service activities or programs require funds to be raised for the service or program to occur. By fundraising for a specific service activity or program the Vinnies Youth group has a greater sense of ownership over the activity.

Fundraising activities:

- · Trivia night
- · Dinner dance
- · Cake stalls at the Parish
- Selling chocolates
- · Parish collection
- · Fashion parade

These are all good ways of raising money within the community. The best fundraisers, however, are ones which are new and creative, because they generate more interest and therefore yield greater results.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of social justice issues is an important role for the Society and SVDP Youth. There are many ways your Vinnies Youth group can stand up and speak out in your community.

The best starting point is education. Once people know and care about an issue, they're more likely to act.

Examples of ways to raise awareness:

- Hold a social justice forum to educate the community (through speeches, plays, art, etc.).
- Make community announcements on local radio.
- Organise a themed awareness week (e.g. "Refugee Week" with assemblies, fundraisers, art shows).
- Link with existing dates like International Women's Day or AIDS Day.
- Raise awareness through your parish, e.g. talks at Mass, debates, guest speakers.

This is not a full list – the best way is to be innovative and use methods that suit your community. There are countless ways to educate people about injustice. Be creative!



St Vincent de Paul PATRON OF THE SOCIETY

Born: 24 April 1581 in Pouy, France

Died: 27 September 1660

Occupation: Priest and servant of the poor

Canonisation: 1737 Feast day: 27 September

Vincent was born into a poor farming family. He became a Priest to try to build a better life for himself, being ordained at age 19. In 1605, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery. It is estimated he was a slave for about two years until he was able to escape. He worked in prestigious positions such as chaplain to the Queen's court and for a wealthy family but didn't find these fulfilling. Vincent instead chose to work with the marginalised and forgotten in the community. He began to visit different villages and preach about the good news of Jesus Christ, and instituted an order of Priests, the Congregation of the Mission to do this work as well. In 1633, Vincent co-founded the Daughters of Charity with Louise de Marillac, who was dedicated to helping abandoned children on the streets.

Vincent devoted his life to assisting others in need: the sick and insane, orphans, elderly people, beggars, the starving, prisoners; and galley slaves. He committed himself to helping spread the Good News.





St Louise de Marillac CO-FOUNDER, DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

Born: 12 August 1591 in Auvergne, France

Died: 15 March 1660

Occupation: Wife and mother

Canonisation: 1934

Louise's husband died early in her married life and so she spent much of her time working with abandoned children on the streets of France.

She became a close friend of St Vincent de Paul, and organised a house where women cooked food for prisoners, which was taken to them daily by volunteers. She also set up centres staffed by women, to serve the poor in many villages.

In 1633, she co-founded the Daughters of Charity with St Vincent de Paul. The sisters worked in schools, orphanages and hospitals to assist the poor. At this time it was considered unusual for sisters to leave the convent to work with the poor. Louise displayed patience and compassion, and devoted her life to helping others.





Blessed Trédéric Ozanam FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY

Born: 23 April 1813 in Milan Died: 8 September 1853

Occupation: Lawyer and Professor of Letters,

Husband and Father

Canonisation: Beatified in 1997

Frédéric attended university, studying law and literature. When he was a university student, Frédéric and some friends met with a middle-aged journalist, Emmanuel Bailly, to discuss the poor in Paris and ways they could help. This first meeting took place on April 23, 1833. Frédéric realised that actions spoke just as loud as words and pooled money with others in the group to buy firewood for a poor family, as they all desired to serve the poor as Jesus had done.

A Daughter of Charity, Sr Rosalie Rendu, assisted this small group to meet with the poor in Paris. This group increased in numbers as word spread of their devotion and commitment to serving the poor and fighting social injustice in the community. This group became known as the Society of St Vincent de Paul, as they were so inspired by Vincent's devotion to those in need. Frédéric became of Professor of Law during his lifetime and also wrote many literary works. Frédéric married Emelie Soulacroix in June 1841. He died at age 40 in 1853 from poor health.



Sr Rosalie Rendu

Born: 9 September 1787 in Comfort, France

Died: 7 February 1856

Occupation: Daughter of Charity Canonisation: Beatified in 2003

Sr Rosalie joined the Daughters of Charity as a novice when she was 16. She worked in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Paris where the sisters distributed clothing, food and linen to the poor. Sr Rosalie also worked as a nurse and teacher in this neighbourhood.

It was through her work as a Daughter of Charity that she met Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and acted as a mentor to him and his friends in their mission to assist the poor.





A future not our own

By Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about:

We plant seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.



Ripples of hope

By Robert F. Kennedy



Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence, yet it is the one essential vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully in change.

The joy of giving

By Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Once a beggar came to me and said: "Everybody is giving you something. I also want to give you something." And he offered me a ten-paisa coin.

If I accepted the money, he would go hungry, but if I didn't, he would be unhappy. I accepted it.

And I felt within me, that his gift was greater than the Nobel Prize because he gave all that he had.

I could see in his face the joy of giving.



The power within

By Marianne Williamson

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?'

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others

Kids who are different

By Digby Wolfe

Here's to the kids who are different The kids who don't always get A's, The kids who have ears Twice the size of their peers, And noses that go on for days.

Here's to the kids who are different, The kids they call crazy or dumb, The kids who don't fit, With the guts and the grit, Who dance to a different drum.

Here's to the kids who are different, The kids with the mischievous streak, For when they have grown, As history has shown, It's their difference that makes them unique.



An afternoon in the park



There once was a little boy who wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with a packet of biscuits and some fruit boxes and he started his journey.

When he had gone three blocks he met an old woman.

She was sitting in the park staring at some pigeons.

The boy sat down next to her and opened his suitcase.

He was about to take a drink from his fruit box when he noticed that the lady looked hungry, so he offered her a biscuit.

She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him.

Her smile was so pretty that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered her a fruit box.

Once again she smiled at him. The boy was delighted.

They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As it grew dark the boy realised how tired he was and he got up to leave, but he had gone no more than a few steps when he turned around and ran back to the old woman and gave her a hug. She gave him the biggest smile ever.

When the boy opened the door to his house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked,

"What did you go today that made you so happy?"

He replied, "I had lunch with God."

But before his mother could respond, he added,

"You know what? She's got the most beautiful smile I have ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old woman, also radiant with joy, returned to her home.

Her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face and he asked,

"Mother, what did you do today that made you so happy?"

She replied, "I ate biscuits in the park with God."

But before her son could respond, she added,

"You know, he's much younger than I expected."

What will matter

By Michael Josephson



Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.

There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.

All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten, will pass to someone else.

Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.

It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.

Your grudges, resentments, frustrations, and jealousies will finally disappear.

So, too, your hopes, ambitions, plans, and to-do lists will expire.

The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.

It won't matter where you came from, or on what side of the tracks you lived at the end.

It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.

Even your gender and skin colour will be irrelevant.

So what will matter?

How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built; not what you got, but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success, but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence, but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.

What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance, it's a matter of choice.

Choose to live a life that matters.

The Starfish Story

Adapted from an original story written by Loren Eiseley

A man was walking along the beach early one morning. It was shortly after a storm had subsided and as he continued walking, he noticed that thousands of starfish had been washed up on the beach. Ahead of him was a gigantic rainbow of incredible perfection shimmering into existence. At the base of the rainbow stooped a little boy, gazing fixedly at an object in the sand. Eventually, he flung the object far beyond the breaking surf.

The man went up to him and asked, "Son, what are you doing?" The little boy answered, "I'm throwing starfish back into the sea because if I don't they're going to die." "But there are thousands of starfish. In the larger scheme of things you're not going to make much of a difference to all these starfish." The little boy looked up at him, stooped down again to pick up another starfish and, gently but quickly, flung it back into the ocean.

"It's going to make a big difference to that one," he replied.



Our Mission

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is the largest Catholic lay organisation in the Church. Our members take seriously the commands of the Gospel to serve others and work for justice.

We work in a caring and practical manner to promote human dignity and justice through personal contact with those in need.

Our Vision

We strive to provide person-to-person pratical and effective help to those in need – sharing their burdens and joys, sowing seeds of hope and promoting self-sufficiency.

Our Values

Generosity

Giving of one's self and one's time.

Integrity

Living by the Society's values, vision and mission.

Compassion

Opening our hearts to all in need with understanding and without judgement.

Empathy

Establishing relationships with those in need by actively listening to them and striving to understand how they are feeling.

Responsiveness

Responding to the needs of the poor, the lonely, the marginalised and the dispossessed.

Advocacy

Helping those in need to get the support they need and secure their rightful entitlements to welfare. Working alongside like-minded organisations to address the causes of poverty and injustice.

Respect for people

Serving all in need regardless of creed, ethnicity, or social background.

Respect for the environment

Taking action, and supporting others to take action, to reduce our carbon footprint and live sustainably.

Innovation

Embracing new ways of doing things so we can strengthen the Society and respond more effectively to the disadvantaged in our communities.

Courage

Finding the courage to be close to those who are vulnerable and lonely, and act on their behalf.





We can change the world. With just our hands and our hearts.



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Vinnies Youth are funded and supported by:

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL NEW ZEALAND