

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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Origins

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a worldwide Christian community; founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholic lay people and an older person, who joined together to create the first Conference. The Society wishes to remember them all with gratitude, as they set an example of dedication to the poor and to the Church. From Le Taillandier, who received the first inspiration, to Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Paul Lamache, François Lallier, Jules Deveaux, Félix Clavé, all of them knew, in their humility, how to seek the wise advice and support of the one who would become the first President General of the flourishing Society, Emmanuel Bailly.

The Holy Spirit was undoubtedly present in all of them at the founding of the Society, fostering the charism of each one. Among them, Blessed Frederic Ozanam was a radiant source of inspiration. The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organisation of lay people, men and women.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

The Vincentian Vocation

The vocation of the Society's members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

Any form of personal help...

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

...to anyone in need

The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.

To Seek Out the Poor

Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

Adaptation to a Changing World

Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.

OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

Prayer Before Personal Encounters or Visits

Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit may guide them during their visits and make them channels for the peace and joy of Christ.

Reverence for the poor

Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God's image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ.

Members observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material and any other type of support.

OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

Empathy

Vincentians endeavor to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their own frailty and weakness, their hearts beat with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve. Rather, they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

Promotion of self-sufficiency

Vincentians endeavor to help the poor to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and that of their local community.

OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

Concerns for deeper needs and spirituality

- Vincentians are sincerely concerned with the deeper needs and the spiritual well-being of those they help, always observing a profound respect for their conscience and the faith they believe in, listening and understanding with their hearts, beyond both words and appearances.
- Vincentians serve in hope. They rejoice in discovering the spirit of prayer in the poor, for in the silence, the poor can perceive God's Plan for every person.
- The acceptance of God's Plan leads each one to nurture the seeds of love, generosity, reconciliation and inner peace in themselves, their families and all those whose lives they touch. Vincentians are privileged to foster these signs of the presence of Risen Christ in the poor and among themselves.

OUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POOR

Gratitude to those we visit

Vincentians never forget the many blessings they receive from those they visit.

They recognise that the fruit of their labors springs, not from themselves, but especially from God and from the poor they serve.