

Guidance on Setting up a Youth or Young Adult SSVP Conference



**Society of
St. Vincent de Paul
Scotland**

The aim of this document is to provide guidance and assistance to priests, SSVP members and parishioners on setting up a youth(14-17) or young adult(18-33) SSVP Conferences. New groups may be a combination of both age groups.

SSVP Mission Statement

“As members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, we seek to identify and combat all forms of poverty, by promoting social justice and actively working with those in need, acknowledging that, by freely giving of ourselves, we become more aware of the power of love in all our relationships”

The SSVP is a worldwide Christian community founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholics and one older person who provided them with support and guidance.

Contents

Pages 3-9	SSVP Work & Core Values
Page 10	Organisation of SSVP
Pages 11-14	Setting up the group -Registering with SSVP National Office -Opening a Bank account
Page 15	Protecting Vulnerable Groups
Pages 16-19	The Conference
Pages 20-21	Vincentian Spirituality
Pages 22-24	Frederic Ozanam
Pages 24-27	Keeping young people involved



SSVP Work and Core Values



**Society of
St. Vincent de Paul
Scotland**

No work of charity is foreign to the Society of St Vincent De Paul. We are involved in a diverse range of activities characterised by:

Any form of personal help

This includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions.

To anyone in need

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

Seeking out the poor

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

Adapting to the changing world

Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to the 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.

Core Values

Vincentians seek to emulate St. Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:



St Augustine's, Coatbridge Youth and Senior Conference

- **Simplicity** – frankness, integrity, genuineness.
- **Humility** – accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts talents and charisms, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.
- **Gentleness** – friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, tenderness and patience in our relationship with others.
- **Selflessness** – dying to our ego with a life of self-sacrifice; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.
- **Zeal**-enthusiasm, energy and fervour

A vocation for every moment of our lives

The Vincentian vocation affects all aspects of members' daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring in their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the Conferences only after fulfilling their family and professional duties.

Members, conferences, councils – communities of faith & love

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour in need.



St Roch's Secondary School SSVP group
Nursing home Gardening project

Equality

The Society, in each of its Conferences (the primary basic unit of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul), makes no distinction regarding gender, wealth, occupation, social status or ethnic origin.

Meetings of the Vincentian members

Members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in Conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight.

Democracy

All decisions are made by consensus after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.

Presidents as servant leaders

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms (meaning any good gift that flows from God's love to man) of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

Formation of members

It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members and Officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor and help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for the poor. The Society also offers members higher training in order to better help to raise the cultural and social level of those who request this support.

Relationship with civil society – work for social justice

The Society gives immediate help but also seeks mid-term and long term solutions. The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. It is, therefore, committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and to contributing to their elimination.

In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice;

- In its struggle for justice, the Society must keep in mind the demands of charity.
- A vision of the civilization of love
- Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, and
- Vincentians envision a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

As citizens of one world, Vincentians listen to the voice of the Church which demands their participation in creating a more equitable and compassionate social order, promoting the culture of life and the civilization of love. In this way, the Society shares the Church's mission to evangelise the world through visible witness, in both actions and

words. The Society does not identify with any political party and always adopts a nonviolent approach. It is good that some members follow and fully participate in their political vocation in such a way that they bring Christian values to political matters.

Working with communities

The Society should work not only with individuals in need but also with families and communities. It can help an excluded or deprived local community to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity which leads it to improve its economic, social or environmental well-being, always retaining the personal contact of members with those who suffer.

Vision of the future

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future, looking towards sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations. The practical Vincentian approach to social justice. The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those we visit who suffer from injustice.



St Margaret's Youth SSVP group, Shetland

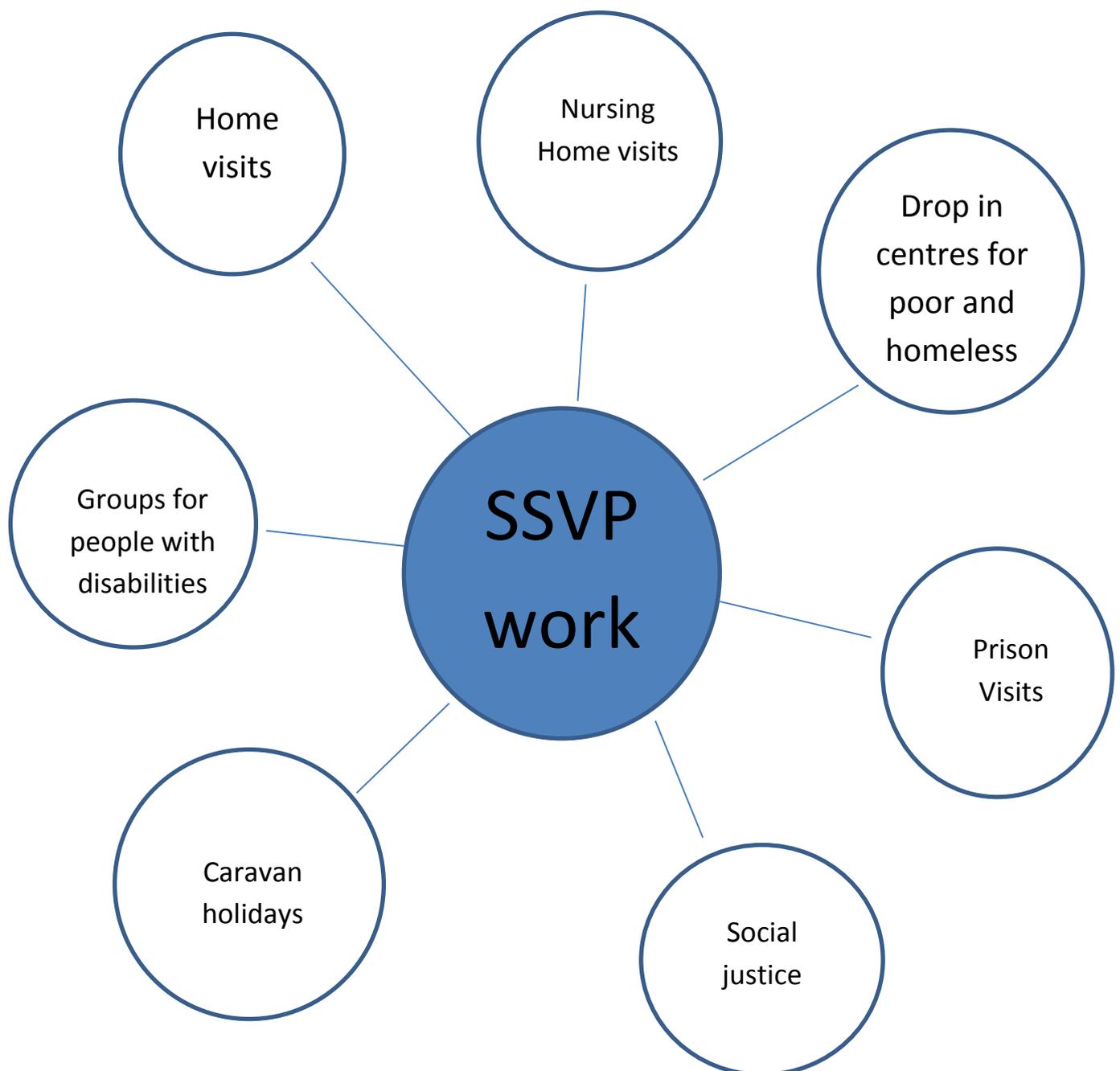
A voice for the voiceless

The Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored.

Striving to change attitudes

Vincentians oppose discrimination of all kinds and work to change the attitudes of those who view the weak or those who are different with

prejudice, fear or scorn, attitudes which gravely wound the dignity of others.



SSVP members are called to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. This means that SSVP conferences respond in the most appropriate manner for the situation.

SSVP Organisational Chart

International Council General (CGI)

Representing around 750,000 members from 145 countries

Europe Group 1(Western European countries)

National Council of Scotland (COS)

Representing 2000 members in 7 Dioceses

National Office, Glasgow

Mainly administrative but also youth development

Arch/diocesan Councils (Aberdeen, Dunkeld,

Glasgow, St Andrew's & Edinburgh, Galloway, Glasgow, Motherwell, Paisley)

Groups- grouping of Conferences (usually around 10)

based on geographical area

Parish Conferences

Senior, youth, young adult

Special works Conferences

University Conferences

School groups

Setting up the Conference

Setting up the Conference

There is no set formula for young people involved in a youth or young adult Conference, so any advice that follows is just that; advice. Some youth and young adult Conferences will operate as part of the senior Conference ie they will not have their own bank account etc.

However, if the group are given as much autonomy as possible, it can develop them as leaders. This would be beneficial for the parish Conference and the SSVP in general. We would always want to see youth and senior Conferences working closely together.

- **Getting young people interested**

Often, the best approach is to do just that, approach young people. Perhaps you know their parents and you could speak to them first? Are any young people in the parish working towards the Caritas Award?(this would be extra motivation!)

- **Open event after Masses**

- Make sure that you publicise the event, and personally invite young people along. National office has a variety of materials for conducting an open evening, including posters, an excellent international video called 'Invisible Threads', wrist bands and more.

You should get a commitment from those who are interested in forming an SSVP youth or young adult Conference and set a date for a meeting. Get their contact details(mobile number and email)

- **Works for your group to be involved with**

- It's vital that the group are quickly involved in *doing* something. If there is a senior Conference in the parish, could they help with existing works (could be parish work, and not just Conference)?

Young people across the country are pass-keeping, visiting nursing homes, helping at soup kitchens, organising clothing and food appeals and much more! It is important that young people are given the space to formulate their own ideas and plans, but this can be difficult, so it is always a good idea to have your own ideas.

Young people should always be prepared for the work that they are going to do. For example, if they are going to be working at a soup kitchen or visiting a nursing home, the group adviser or Spiritual adviser should conduct a discussion about expectations, anxieties, conduct etc

Starting up an SSVP Conference is not a difficult process, but there are certain procedures that **must be followed**

- Notifying the right people
 - Registering with SSVP National Office
 - Opening a Bank account
 - Protecting Vulnerable Groups

Staff at SSVP National Office are available at every step to provide help and guidance.

Notifying the right people/Registering with SSVP National Office

It is important that others are aware of the fact that you are setting up a new Conference. They will be able to support and guide you through the process.

- Speak to parish priest/SSVP conference to let them know what you would like to do
- Contact national Office to indicate that you are setting up a Conference.

You will be issued with a unique Conference code. This will also be the name of your bank account. National office will send you membership forms to be completed and returned to the office as soon as possible.

As forms are returned, you will be issued with

- ID cards
- Prayer cards, manuals, induction manuals, cashbook
- Publicity materials

Opening a Bank account

Once you have elected office bearers* and decided on signatories (this should be SSVP members only, not clergy), you will need to open a bank account.

**Volunteers for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer should come forward. If there is more than one volunteer, a secret ballot should be conducted.*

Procedure

1. Decide on which bank you want your Conference to bank with. You should ask the bank for a form to open a charity account. Ensure that the bank knows that you are a charity. Go through procedure as advised by bank.
2. Contact national office- they will provide you with
 - Documentation regarding the legal status of the Society as a charity.
 - A letter of authorisation

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Society of St Vincent de Paul fully embraces the need to protect the people that we are working with, whether they be children or vulnerable adults. We are also keenly aware of the need to protect our members. For example, it is imperative that members never visit alone, but always in pairs.

All members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul are expected to register as a member of the Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults Scheme. There are a few exceptions to this, but as long as a member will come into contact through their SSVP work with children or *vulnerable* adults*, they will need to become a 'PVG Scheme Member'. This is administered through the Church. On joining a Conference, your President should speak to the Parish Co-ordinator (your Parish Priest will be able to tell you who this is) and they will take you through the process.

* A protected adult is defined as an individual aged 16 or over who is provided with (and thus receives) a type of care, support or welfare service as set out in this section.

You will also be expected to attend an awareness session on the topic which will be arranged through the Diocese. It is vital that these two procedures are undertaken to ensure the protection of the vulnerable people that we work with and for our members.

"The Catholic Church in Scotland is concerned with the lives, safety, wholeness and well-being of each individual person within God's purpose for everyone. It seeks to safeguard the welfare of people of all ages who are involved in whatever capacity with the Church and its organisations. As a Church community, we accept that it is the responsibility of all of us, ordained, professed, paid and voluntary members, to work together to prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of children, young people and vulnerable adults."

'Awareness and Safety in our Catholic Communities 2007'

The Conference

Your Conference

The Conference is the basic unit of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Most conferences are engaged in visiting people in their homes, but many also undertake special work such as visiting nursing homes, prisons, hospitals, holidays for young and old, social groups for people with disabilities and drop in centres for the poor and homeless.



Turnbull High School, Bishopbriggs SSVP group

Conferences are responsible for their own work but are linked to the rest of the SSVP through Group Councils (with around 10 conferences) and Diocesan Councils (which co-ordinate the Group Councils and Conferences)

Conferences are led by a President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The President chairs meetings, motivates members, organises, develops and directs the work of the Conference. The Conference President should ensure that any correspondence is shared. A new President is elected every 3 years (presidents can serve two terms of office). If a President steps down before their term is over, an election should be held as normal.

The Secretary keeps the minutes and other records.

The Treasurer is the Conference's 'purse-keeper.' They keep an accurate record of money coming in and going out, sees that bills are properly checked and paid, ensures that Dues (full explanation of Dues in Manual and Rule) are paid to the Council of Scotland and provides full financial information to members in a spirit of transparency, openness and accountability.

A role for everyone

Many Conferences are also creating new roles that enable people to develop and build on their own areas of interest. For example, one member may have a special responsibility for liaising with schools, or for social justice. A member could also take responsibility for membership-recruiting, induction, training etc.

Being part of the community

Our job is to make sure that all the people in the local area-those in need, other voluntary and statutory organisation and the general public-understand clearly what the SSVP is trying to do and know how to contact us. Through networking and promoting our services we can ensure that people in need know how to contact us and can access the help they need when it is needed.

Conference Meeting essentials

A Conference meeting always includes the following:

- a)** Opening and closing prayers, formal and spontaneous. (A prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and a prayer for those whose suffering they wish to share are obligatory).
- b)** A spiritual reading or meditation, on which members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding. This is a very important part of the meeting.
- c)** Reading and approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting, according to the notes taken by the Secretary on the matters discussed and agreed at each meeting.
- d)** Reading and approval of the financial report presented by the Treasurer, including the amounts of available funds and expenses.
- e)** Reports on the tasks completed or visits made by the members since the previous meeting to families and friends in need and also discussion of ways to improve the Conference's service.
- f)** Allocation of the visits and other tasks entrusted to each member for the following week by the President, after consultation with the Conference. **Visits must be made in pairs.***

***This rule is vital and must be followed at all times. It is in accordance with both the International Rule of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and Church Safeguarding procedures.**

g) A secret collection- a collection amongst the members at the meeting.

h) Review of any correspondence.

i) Whenever possible, the inclusion of training periods for members and communication of information about all levels of the Society.

Vincentian Spirituality

Vincentian Spirituality and Vocation

The journey together toward holiness

- Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness.
- Attending the meeting of the Conference or Council, where shared fraternal spirituality is a source of inspiration.
- Transforming their concern into action and their compassion into practical and effective love.

Prayer in Union in Christ

- In every Conference throughout the world and in their personal lives, Vincentians raise their prayers to God, united with the prayer of Christ, on behalf of one another and their masters the poor, whose suffering they wish to share.

"Charity is concerned with giving others what belongs to me; Justice is concerned with giving others what belongs to them."

Blessed Frederic Ozanam

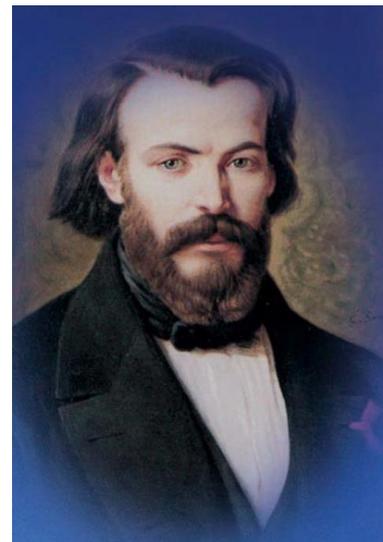
1813 - 1853

Antoine Frederic Ozanam was born on 23 April 1813, in Milan where his parents, originally from the Lyons region of France, were temporarily established because of the Napoleonic Wars. His family was profoundly Christian and from his earliest years Frederic was taught the love of God and that Christ was to be found in the persons of all those carrying the heavy burden of suffering and social injustice.

After his studies at the Royal College of Lyons, he set out, at the wish of his parents rather than his own, to Paris to study Law, and was at once projected into the troubled society of that age. Scepticism was rife in the Sorbonne University, and Frederic found himself isolated and discouraged and writing to a friend in 1831 he says: "The false thought and corruption like a huge dead body, pervades Paris."

Through his friends, Frederic overcame much of the aversion he felt towards Paris in his early days at the Sorbonne, and he began to have great hopes for the future. He sought great consolation in his two loves, science and Catholicism: an unflinching certainty dominated his life - Christianity was the only cure for the ills of contemporary society.

Not content to work fifteen hours each day at his studies, to study foreign languages, to discover the secrets of other religions, he sought allies to share his views and these often spoke out boldly in the



Sorbonne when false doctrine was propagated. He was always a living witness to the truth and realised the deep need for himself and his contemporaries to deepen their own faith through study and prayer.

With his companions he founded a Conference of History, a meeting open to everyone, even the unbelieving, for free discussion and for the defence of the Catholic faith. The history of the Church and the scientific and social implications of the Gospel were the basis of many of these lively discussions.

Often the young Catholics were jibed at: "What is the practical outcome of your doctrine? **Show us your Christian works!**" This led the seven young men to the ardent desire to put their faith into action-to evangelise not only by word, but by the constant practice of charity.

And so it came about that, one winter's day when they were discussing precisely this point, Ozanam, who had kept unusually silent during the discussion, suddenly cried out: "The blessing of the poor is the blessing of God. Let us go to the poor!" And immediately he set out to give away all the remaining fuel for his fire to an old down-and-out neighbour.

The work for the poor continued in a modest way, for the students were not themselves the richest of men. They asked Sister Rosalie, a Daughter of Charity working in Paris, for the names and addresses of needy people, and to these they brought a little bread and much religion.

All Ozanam's efforts for social justice, which rank him amongst the nineteenth century's greatest social champions, were done with the full approbation of the then Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Affre, who was to die on the barricades of the Revolution of 1848.

A thinking man, Ozanam was also a man of action. He wished for the establishment of true democracy through justice and charity, and he counted on the growing Society of St Vincent de Paul, founded from his Conference of History in 1833, to further his aim in every way possible. He gave himself most generously in his work for the University and for the Society, even though he was in poor health. At the end of 1852 he was advised to go to Italy for a complete rest. No cure resulted, however, and his strength continued to ebb away. This was a sadness to him, but in a short time he began to feel himself attracted towards Eternity-on his fortieth birthday he announced his fiat and abandoned himself completely to God's will.

Frederic Ozanam is buried in the Carmelite Crypt of the Institut Catholique de Paris-among the young students to whom he had given the very best of himself.

He understood that charity must lead to efforts to remedy injustice. Charity and justice go together.

He had the clear-sighted courage to seek a front-line social and political commitment in a troubled time in the life of his country, for no society can accept indigence as if it were a simple fatality without damaging its honour”

“Always be quite simple and sincere and ask God to grant me those two virtues”

St. Vincent de Paul

1581-1660

Having been placed under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul by the founding members, members of the Society are inspired by his spirituality, manifest in his attitudes, his thoughts, his example and his words.



For Vincentians, the key aspects of St. Vincent's spirituality are:

- To love God, our Father, with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms;
- To see Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ;
- To share the compassionate and liberating love of Christ the Evangeliser and Servant of the poor;
- To heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Vincent was born in Pouy, in the Landes of France in a little village now called Berceau de St Vincent (St Vincent's Cradle). He was the third of the six children of hardworking parents, and spent his younger years on the family farm tending the sheep. It was here that he acquired his love of quiet and recollection.

His intelligence won the admiration of the parish priest and caused his father to send him off to college, where he was an ardent student and soon conceived the idea of becoming a priest. He then set off to Toulouse for his studies for the priesthood: he was ordained in 1600, when he was just twenty years old. In 1610, after the assassination of Henry IV, he was granted the benefice of an abbey in the diocese of

Saintes and could have made for himself an excellent career in the Church. However, after a serious spiritual crisis, he abdicated his rights over the abbey and decided to devote the rest of his life to the service of the poor.

In September, 1613, Vincent became the chaplain to the influential family of Philip Emmanuel de Gondi, landowner of large properties in the north of France. He exercised a great influence on the family, and his travels with them showed him the needs of a people starved spiritually and physically and served by an uneducated clergy. It was then that he realised that the evangelisation of rural France was a vital need, and this missionary passion remained with him for the rest of his life.

After a while he felt his service with the de Gondi family too much of a luxury, and so once again became a parish priest, this time in the parish of Chaillon-les-Dombes a village morally abandoned, with a deserted church, disinherited poor and a Protestant richer class. Together with a curate, his care of the parish made it flourish and it was here that he founded a Society of Charity to serve the poor.

But the de Gondi family missed him, and he was forced unwillingly to return to Paris to their service. At this point de Gondi appointed him as chaplain to the galley slaves, and with his customary energy he began to improve their appalling physical and moral condition. He insisted on the value of witness throughout all his works.

1625 was a vital year to him, for during it he founded the Congregation of the Mission (the Lazarists or Vincentians), and began a partnership of charity with Louise de Marillac.

Soon the "Dames de la Charite" had been set up, at first with a group of well-bred ladies: under Louise de Marillac they soon became Vincent's hands for work and his witnesses in the love of Christ. In

1633, to ensure their permanence, they were officially consecrated as the Daughters of Charity, vowing their entire lives to those who suffered. Up to his eightieth year he remained active and the work continued to expand. He died in September 1660, worn out from a life of unbelievable activity of mind and body. In 1729 he was beatified and his canonisation followed in 1737. In 1883 Frederic Ozanam was to place the Society he had founded under the patronage of St Vincent de Paul, and in 1885 Pope Leo XIII proclaimed St Vincent the patron of all works of charity. His feast is now celebrated on the anniversary of his death, September 27th. St Vincent de Paul played what can only be described as a providential role in the history of France and, through his works, in the history of the world.

Keeping young people involved

Keeping your youth/young adult Conference going

It is important to recognise that young people often only commit to something for a period of time. This is often because they have started university or a new job, or have moved house. However, sometimes they simply just lose interest! It is important therefore that we do our best to keep them involved. They are not full proof, but doing the following can help;

- Ensure that there is meaningful, on-going work
 - Keep an eye on the situation- has a visit to a nursing home ended for some reason? Has a member of the group not been turning up for things on a regular basis?

Sometimes new opportunities need to be researched.

- Provide support, reassurance and guidance where necessary
 - Young people can be fragile, they have so many pressures on them. Make sure that they are constantly reassured and are not left on their own to just get on with it.
- Attend meetings where possible
- Tap into national and Diocesan events that provide formation and an opportunity to meet with other young Vincentians
 - Camp Frederic(for 14 to 17 year olds, but 18 + are invited as group leaders)
 - Young adults residential conference(planned for November)
 - SSVV National AGM
 - On-going National/Diocesan Church events

Notes



**Society of
St. Vincent de Paul
Scotland**

SSVP Contacts

SSVP National Office
Regent House
113 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 2RU

Phone : 0141 226 8833

Email: youth@ssvpscotland.com

Website: www.ssvpscotland.com

Facebook : Young Vinnies

Twitter : YouthSSVP

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is a Registered Charity SC006326.