



Resource and Reflection Guide – Faith in Action

An Introduction

“Of course, what we call the poor at times may not be poor at all. There are those who live in humble circumstances who are ‘rich’ beyond measure. The genuinely poor are those robbed of the ability to make choices for themselves – the choice for safe and clean water, the choice of an education, the choice of protection from abuse, the choice of medical care and more” – The poverty and justice bible.

What is Mini Vinnies?

Mini Vinnies is a group of primary school young people who get together to help those in need within their school community. Mini Vinnies introduces children to social justice issues, to the St Vincent de Paul Society and to living faith through action.

What does a Mini Vinnies group do?

Mini Vinnies is about doing good works in the community, but it is also about young people meeting to talk and share ideas and concerns, to have fun and to support each other. The Vinnies model of ‘See, Think, Do’ is a great way to get young people thinking and talking about their spirituality; by connecting their beliefs and values with service activities and issues in their community, they can help make their faith real, meaningful and relevant.

The actions of a Mini Vinnies group generally involve three components:

‘See’

‘Think’

‘Do’

VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY

The aim of the St Vincent de Paul Society is to provide a means whereby members can live out Christian values – Vincentians do not attempt to preach or convert, nor do they attach any conditions to their aid – but they do practice love for their neighbour in the person of those in need.

Because this message of love is central to the *Good Works* of the St Vincent de Paul Society, it is important that Vinnies members take time to pray together and contemplate the spirit and example of Jesus, Blessed Frederic Ozanam and St Vincent de Paul.

At Vinnies, we recognise the rich diversity of members in terms of their faith, spirituality, culture, gender and work roles. We acknowledge that individuals express their faith or spirituality in different ways, but we are brought together by a common desire to give of ourselves and work in solidarity with people who are poor, marginalised or without power.





Vincentian Core Values

Respect – Recognising our own value and the value of others.

Compassionate Service – Providing excellent care with gentleness and kindness.

Simplicity – Acting with integrity, clarity and honesty.

Advocacy for people in need – Supporting those who lack resources for a healthy life and full human development.

Catholic social teaching – Our conferences and Special Works come under the framework of Gospel values and Church social teaching. These values acknowledge:

- The presence of Christ in individuals
- Human rights of all individuals
- Commitment to social justice

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

The essential elements of the St Vincent de Paul Society, which are at the centre of our *Good Works* and our Vincentian spirituality, are:

- Offering a hand up, not just a hand out;
- Integrating the social and ethical teaching of the Catholic Church;
- Working on behalf of justice as advocates for the needy;
- Respecting the dignity of all persons;
- Fostering the sacredness of all human life at every stage of development from conception to death;
- Ensuring respect for other faith beliefs at all times;
- Bringing God's unconditional love to those in need, without preaching to people.

Personal Development

Living out their faith through action can assist in the personal development of young people. By getting involved in *Good Works*, challenging social injustice and reflecting on these experiences, Mini Vinnies members can come to a greater understanding of themselves, their values and their place in the world. Reflection and sharing can also help with the formation of the group as a whole, allowing Mini Vinnies members to get to know each other better and work together more effectively and positively. It is therefore important to maintain a spiritual, reflective approach to meetings and service activities. This may involve:

- Learning about the history, works and ethos of the St Vincent de Paul Society;
- Reflections (poems, prayers, songs, meditations) – giving the young people some quiet time and helping to prepare them spiritually for doing good works;
- Discussion about issues – this could be related to newspaper articles, current affairs etc, or to things that are happening within the school community;
- Organising liturgies for Catholic religious holidays and times of importance to the Mini Vinnies group, such as the end of the school year and the feast days of St Vincent de Paul Society and Blessed Frederic Ozanam;
- Asking the parish priest to say a prayer for the Mini Vinnies group and their good works at a school Mass or at weekend services;





- Personal sharing – giving the young people the opportunity to talk about how they're feeling, what they have been thinking about, issues that concern them and their reactions to things going on in the world around them.
- Retreat days – a day or half-day could be set aside for a mini-retreat for the Mini Vinnies. The retreat could include some team-building and getting-to-know-you games, a meditation and reflections on what the group has been involved in during the term or over the whole year.

Prayer

Prayer time at the start of meetings could follow this process:

- The reading of a prayer or reflection prepared by the teacher or one of the students;
- Personal prayers – it is good to give the children a chance to pray together for people or causes important to members of the group;
- General discussion about how everyone in the group is feeling – this might take the form of going around and asking each person for a highlight from the past week, or to give the week a rating out of 10.

***I looked again and saw people being ill-treated everywhere on earth.
They were crying, but no-one was there to offer comfort,
and those who ill-treated them were powerful.***

– ***Ecclesiastes 4:1***

PRAYERS

Merciful God,
Open my eyes and ears to the misery around me;
Open my hands and heart in generous and compassionate response.
Through my compassion for those in need,
May your mercy be known in our world.

Lord, open our eyes that we may see the deepest needs of your people.
Move our hands that we may feed the hungry.
Touch our hearts that they may bring warmth to those who are sad.
Let us share our time and possessions with those in need.
Give us the care that strengthens the sick.
May we all be a source of support and encouragement for each other as
we strive to build a more loving society.

Dear God,
Open our eyes that we may see the needs of others;
Open our ears that we may hear their cries;
Open our hearts that we may feel their anguish and their joy.
Let us not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless, because of the anger and might of the powerful.
Show us where love and hope and faith are needed,
and use us to bring them to those places.
Open our ears and eyes, our hearts and lives,
that we may in these coming days be able to do some work of justice and peace for you.





SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

One at a Time

A woman was walking down a deserted beach at sunset. As she walked along, she began to see a man in the distance. As she grew nearer, she noticed that the man kept leaning down, picking up something and throwing it out into the water. Time and again he kept hurling things out into the ocean.

As the woman approached even closer, she noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water. The woman was puzzled. She approached the man and said "Good evening, friend. I was wondering what you were doing."

"I am throwing these starfish back into the ocean" said the man. "You see, it's low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea they'll die up here from a lack of oxygen."

"I understand," the woman replied, "but there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get to all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realise this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down this coast? Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The man smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Made a difference to that one!"

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 on 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 fruitbox. Once again she smiled at him. The boy was delighted. He 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 him "What did you do 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".





**The 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 are twice the size of their peers,
Or have noses that go on for days.

Here's to the kids who are different;
The kids who are just out of step,
The kids they all tease,
Who have cuts on their knees,
And whose sneakers are constantly wet.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE BIBLE

The sermon on the mount

Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him.

² Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

³ How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of [Heaven](#) is theirs.

⁴ Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

⁵ Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as [children](#) of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted in the [cause](#) of uprightness: the kingdom of [Heaven](#) is theirs.

¹¹ Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of [calumny](#) against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward [will](#) be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.
Matthew 5:1-12





Salt and Light

¹³ 'You are [salt](#) for the earth. But if [salt](#) loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is [good](#) for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ 'You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ No one [lights](#) a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house.

¹⁶ In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your [good](#) works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

Love one another as I have loved you

I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you.

³⁵ It is by your love for one another, that everyone [will](#) recognise you as my disciples.

John 13:34-35

Love your enemies.

