

Vinnies in the Parish

Activity 1

“To embrace the whole world in a network of love.”
- Frederic Ozanam

★ How did Vinnies Conferences start?

Frederic Ozanam was a young man who was living in France in 1833. He was 19 years old and a uni student and a strong Catholic. He was a very clever young man. At that time France was going through a time of struggle. Many people did not have enough money to feed their families or to keep themselves warm during winter. Many people lived in slums and had a hard time just surviving from day to day.

Frederic was from a wealthy family so he wasn't suffering as so many around him were. Being a strong Catholic he used to talk about how important it was to love your neighbours, but he never did anything to help the people suffering all around him.

One day at university his classmates challenged him to actually DO SOMETHING! Frederic took the challenge very seriously and got together a group of his friends to make a difference to the lives of those suffering around them.

The very first thing Frederic and his friends did was starting to meet regularly to pray and talk together about how they could help those who were suffering.

They decided to start by delivering firewood to poor families. They visited the families in their homes and offered them friendship and support as well as the bundle of firewood.

Giving friendship and support remains a key part of the work of the Society.

★ What is a Conference?



In Vinnies “Conference” is the word we use to describe a group of people who get together to help those in need in their parish, or local community.

There are three elements that make up a conference:

- 1. Meeting together regularly**
- 2. Praying together**
- 3. Doing Good works**

The St Vincent de Paul Society provides its members with the opportunity to live their faith through action.

1. Ask your teacher if there is a conference in your local Parish.
2. If there is, make contact with them and ask them to come chat to your Mini Vinnies group about what the works that their conference does.

3. When the conference is visiting ask them if there is anyone way that your Mini Vinnies group can help out the conference.

Here are some ideas of things your Mini Vinnies group could do:

- Your Mini Vinnies group could form a choir and put on a concert for the residents of the area where the conference does Home Visitation
- Your Mini Vinnies group could prepare little toiletry packs for the people the conference visit. These could include little bottles your parents may have saved/ kept from hotels, little tissue packs, combs and deodorant
- Make Christmas card or Easter Cards for the people the conference visit.

Statistics for Vinnies NSW



- There are 471 conferences in NSW
- There are 171 Mini Vinnies and Youth and Young conferences in NSW
- 473,041 people were assisted by Conferences in one year
- 207,739 home visitations were carried out by conference members
- 19,669 people in NSW volunteer with Vinnies

★ A story of home visitation...

As they welcomed us into their home I saw shame and embarrassment on their faces. It was a completely humbling experience to have them share their struggles with us – two complete strangers.

As our visit continued we heard a little of their story although we were very careful not to ask too many questions. This young family was doing well until their Mum had the second baby a few months ago, but she was not entitled to paid maternity

leave. Dad works hard and was working long hours, but recently had his shifts cut back to 6 hours a week.

He is looking for another job to provide for the family. We were able to help them get some groceries for the week and encouraged them to call again if it took a few weeks to get work and get back on their feet.

This is the reason the St Vincent de Paul Society started. It was very clear to me that this simple, personal chat was the reason for our existence.

★ Vinnies Centres



There are 267 Vinnies Centres across NSW. There are actually more Vinnies shops than Woolworths supermarkets in NSW!

Vinnies Centres are a widely known as a place where you can get cheap second hand clothing. Not many people know that Vinnies Centres also offer assistance to those in need. The Centres provide those seeking assistance with clothing and furniture.

For many people who seek support from Vinnies the Centres is the first place they go to.

Case Study

What is home visitation?

Home visitation is visiting people in their homes who are experiencing a hard time to offer friendship, support and material assistance.

Some of the issues that families who receive home visitation support are facing:

- Money issues
- Relationship break downs
- Health problems
- Drought
- Death in the family
- Unique individual circumstances

Activity 2

In your Mini Vinnies group talk about the issues above and any other issues that you know affect people living in your local area.

Do some research, read newspapers to learn more about what is going on in your local area.



Activity 3



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Learn about the Vinnies hands logo.

Q: Who do the three hands represent?

A: Hands answer: The hand of Christ blesses, the hand of charity offers, the hands of suffering receives.

- How does this impact on your work in Mini Vinnies?
- Draw a picture of the three hands helping on a Home visitation.

For more information go to:

St Vincent de Paul Society:

www.vinnies.org.au

Sisters of Mercy - Social Justice Resources:

www.mercy.org.au

