



Vinnies in the Parish

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

– Frederic Ozanam

■ HOW DID CONFERENCES START?

Frederic’s family was an upper middle class Catholic family – his father was a doctor and his mother was an heiress. He was one of fourteen children, but he was one of only three to survive to adulthood, with 11 of his siblings dying from disease at a young age.

Frederic was a very intelligent young man and decided to study Law at Sorbonne University. People at Sorbonne were very anti-Christian, and there were not many other Catholic students. Many Students – and even teachers – at the university attacked the religious beliefs of Frederic and his fellow Christians, claiming that the Church had become irrelevant and was not doing anything to help the many poor and suffering people of France. Frederic, who was seen as a natural leader of his fellow Catholic students, decided to take action, and he started a Conference of Charity with a few other students.

Guided by a middle-aged journalist named Emmanuel Bailly, the Conference members were driven by a deep desire to build their faith, and they decided to go out and become servants of the poor, just as Jesus

Christ had done. The group followed the example of St Vincent– the French saint who had done so much work to help the poor 200 years earlier – and named their Conference ‘the Society of St Vincent de Paul’. The group was also inspired by a young Daughter of Charity, Rosalie Rendu and the young men worked closely with her to help the poor people of Paris.

As well as becoming a lawyer, Frederic was also a teacher and a scholar. He wrote many essays and journal articles on a whole range of subjects, and was appointed Lecturer in Foreign Literature at the University of Lyon. Much of Frederic’s work was based on his passion for social justice, and he argued for better social conditions, higher moral standards and the restoration of the Catholic faith in France.

On 23rd June 1841, Frederic married a woman named Amelie Soulacroix, who in 1845 gave birth to their daughter Marie. Frederic was a sick man his whole life, and was forced to resign from his job in 1852. He died in September 1853, at the age of 40.

“Let us do whatever good lies in our hands” – Frederic Ozanam

■ STATISTICS FOR VINNIES NSW

Annual Report 2008-2009

- There were 421 Conferences in NSW
- There were 185 Mini Vinnies and Youth Conferences
- 19 669 volunteers across NSW

Volunteer Statistics

- 427, 572 people were assisted by Conferences
- 197,571 home visitations were done by conference members

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.



ACTIVITY 1

1. Set up a Vinnies Youth Conference in your school or local area (if you don’t already have one!)
2. Meet with the local Vinnies Parish Conference to find out what they are doing within your community and find out what area your group could assist with.

Some ideas for your Youth Conference:

- The Vinnies group could organise a school play or musical. You could add a meal and make the concert free of charge and invite families and older members of the community to attend.
- Organise with your parish conference members to join their local Green Team to assist older members of the community with some maintenance or gardening.

- Organise to borrow or buy clothes from Vinnies stores and host a Vinnies fashion parade with a gold coin donation.
- Get in touch with your local Vinnies Youth Coordinator about volunteering on other youth programs. Buddies days, Kids Camps or Door Knock Appeal are great opportunities for young volunteers (16+) to assist younger disadvantaged kids.



■ A STORY OF HOME VISITATION

As they welcomed us into their home I saw that they were embarrassed to have to ask for help. 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. The father

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

He was 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.



■ 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:

- Financial hardship
- Relationship break downs
- Health problems
- Drought
- Death in the family
- Unique individual circumstances



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

ACTIVITY 3

Learn about the Vinnies hands logo.

- Who do the three hands represent?
- How does this impact on your work in your High School or Young Adult Conference?
- Draw a picture of the three hands helping on a home visitation.

ACTIVITY 2

What issues are faced within your local community?

Do any of these issues affect your school community?

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

For more information

St Vincent de Paul Society: www.vinnies.org.au

Sisters of Mercy – Social Justice Resources: www.mercy.org.au