

MEDIA RELEASE

5th World Day of the Poor

14 November 2021

This year on the 5th World Day of the Poor, the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society has reiterated its commitment to Catholic Social Teaching principles – those Gospel values that uphold the dignity of every human being.

National President Claire Victory said that as Vincentians we oppose individualism as we commit to the common good.

‘We encourage the empowerment of people through participation at whatever level might be possible,’ Ms Victory said.

‘We stand with others who share these values and above all we defend the preferential option for people living with the structural causes of poverty and disadvantage.

‘These principles guide us through economic, political, personal and spiritual encounters and are central to the way the Society works and operates.

‘As Vincentians we travel closely with people in local communities right across Australia.

‘We live and work in those communities and the people we help are literally our neighbours,’ Ms Victory said.

This year Pope Francis calls on us to oppose the culture of indifference and injustice directed at people living with poverty. He says poverty is the result of selfishness and he calls on us to recognise the varied and excessive forms of social disorder that are generating ever new forms of poverty.

‘There seems to be a growing notion that the poor are not only responsible for their condition, but that they represent an intolerable burden for an economic system focused on the interests of a few privileged groups.

‘A market that ignores ethical principles, or picks and chooses from among them, creates inhumane conditions for people already in precarious situations.

‘We are now seeing the creation of new traps of poverty and exclusion, set by unscrupulous economic and financial actors lacking in a humanitarian sense and in social responsibility,’ Pope Francis said.

He warned against occasional acts of charity which presuppose a ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’, an approach he says that risks gratifying those who do the giving and demeaning the recipients.

Instead, he encourages us to engage in enduring, mutual sharing to restore lost dignity and ensure necessary social inclusion, actions he says will strengthen solidarity and lay the necessary foundations for achieving justice.

He noted that the poor have increased disproportionately as a result of the pandemic and called on all of us to find the most suitable means of combatting the virus at the global level without promoting partisan interests.

Read Pope Francis’s Message for the 5th World Day of the Poor [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.