

# FACT BOOK

## ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

This Fact Book provides an overview of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Queensland. It also looks at the lives and works of the founders of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

There are a range of classroom activities linked to the Fact Book which have been designed to meet the Religious Education content descriptors.

The Fact Book is intended to be used as a reference guide for students, to assist them with completing the activities. Most of the activities will direct the students to read a certain section of

the fact book before attempting the task. Some of the activities are stand-alone and do not require the use of the fact book. The **Curriculum Map** details which activities are relevant for each year level, as well as providing a list of additional activities. The information contained in this fact book is current and accurate at the time of publication. It is understood that some of the information contained throughout this fact book may change and need to be updated as new information becomes available.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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## WEBSITES

St Vincent de Paul Society - [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

Vinnies Youth Queensland - [www.vinniesyouthqld.org.au](http://www.vinniesyouthqld.org.au)

*Created for the teacher and with the classroom experience in mind, these resources have been designed and developed by a registered teacher.*

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# THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

## OUR STORY

The St Vincent de Paul Society is an international organisation operating in 135 countries and has over 800,000 members worldwide. The Society has a presence on every continent in the world, with the exception of Antarctica.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded by a 20 year old student named Frederic Ozanam in 1833. His compassionate outlook, enthusiasm and vision continues today in Australia. There are thousands of people who every day share their time, care for humanity and energy to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people all around Australia.

The first Australian conference was founded in Victoria by Fr Gerald Ward at St Francis' Church, Melbourne on 5 March 1854. A Conference is a group of members who come together to fulfil the Mission of the Society in accordance with the Rule. A Conference may be established within any community, such as a parish, town, suburb, school, university, workplace, ethnic or social group.

## OUR MISSION

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

***The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it.***

*The Rule (2012, p. 26: 7.1)*

The Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering “a hand up” to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.



**THE HAND OF CHRIST  
BLESSSES THE CUP**



**HE HAND OF LOVE  
OFFERS THE CUP**



**THE HAND OF SUFFERING  
RECEIVES THE CUP**

# THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

When we speak about social justice we go to the heart of what the St Vincent de Paul Society stands for. We are called, as Vincentians, to feed, clothe, house and assist our brothers and sisters who are forced to the margins of society.

We are also called to ask why they are left out and pushed out. We want a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

In assisting people who are denied equality and dignity we make a prophetic statement about the dignity and equality of all people in God's sight. In asking the simple question about the causes of injustice we issue a prophetic call to all people of good will to work creatively to build equality and justice into our society.

Especially through our national and state councils we give voice to those who are voiceless, standing with them and advocating for them. As Vincentians we do not close our eyes to the growing division in Australia and the world between the increasingly prosperous and the increasingly poor.

We seek to share both bread and hope with our brothers and sisters, recognising Christ in their painful stories and witnessing the Good News of justice and compassion. They entrust a little of their lives to us. We honour this trust by speaking the truth of their stories and calling on the people of our nation to address the structural causes of poverty and inequality. We call for solutions to injustice by engaging government, working with other agencies and raising awareness across the community. A number of priorities have been set for the Society in Australia, focusing on four key issues:

- 1. Affordable housing and homelessness.**
- 2. Lack of adequate income and access to employment for all.**
- 3. Public policy to eliminate poverty and inequality.**
- 4. Issues affecting particular groups, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and refugees and asylum seekers.**



## **OUR VALUES**

The St Vincent de Paul Society stands for and demonstrates seven key values.

### **COMMITMENT**

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values.

### **COMPASSION**

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement.

### **RESPECT**

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions.

### **INTEGRITY**

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values.

### **EMPATHY**

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception.

### **ADVOCACY**

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice.

### **COURAGE**

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future.

# QUEENSLAND

The St Vincent de Paul Society has been in Queensland since 1894, when the St Brigids' Red Hill Conference was established. There are now more than 9,500 members and volunteers across Queensland who help those who are struggling to take control of their lives whilst restoring their dignity; providing a hand up, not just a hand out. In 2017, the Society in Queensland supported almost 288,000 people and provided approximately \$11 million in financial assistance to those in need.

The Society differs from most charitable organisations in that our members, known as Vincentians, and volunteers are the core of our work. In Queensland, we have 213 Conferences (local branches) within our eight Diocese, or regions. There are also more than 120 Vinnies shops in Queensland.

Members and volunteers are supported by some staff; however costs are kept to a minimum, meaning more money goes directly to those who are requiring the Society's assistance.

The Society's assistance is only possible by the generosity and compassion of our supporters. Together we can make a difference to many lives.



## SERVICES

The St Vincent de Paul Society offers a wide range of services including:

- Advocacy
- Aged Care facilities
- Budget counselling
- Care and support centres
- Childcare services
- Children's activities and holiday programs
- Disability services
- Disaster recovery
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation services
- Emergency accommodation
- Employment support services
- Friendship programs for people with a mental illness
- Home and hospital visitation
- Homeless accommodation and support services
- Low-cost food outlets
- Migrant and refugee support services
- Mobile food services
- Overseas support programs
- Prison visitation
- Refuge accommodation for women and children
- School-based mentoring programs
- Self-care aged units
- Subsidised accommodation for tertiary students
- Support programs for people with a mental illness
- Supported employment for people with a physical or mental disability
- Tutoring program for refugees
- Vinnies Centres
- Volunteer programs
- Youth drop-in centres
- Youth programs

# QUEENSLAND

## VOLUNTEERING

By volunteering, you can be sure you're making a difference for those in need. For some Vinnies volunteers, this is a chance to give something back to the community, to use their skills and experience to make a difference in the lives of people who need assistance the most. For others, it is a chance to develop new skills and experience in a supportive environment.

Volunteering for Vinnies is a rich and rewarding experience. As a volunteer, you'll benefit from:

- The satisfaction of helping others
- Sharing your skills and teaching others
- Learning new skills
- The sense of community and friendship.

## VOLUNTEERING IN A RETAIL CENTRE

Vinnies has hundreds of stores Australia wide. Revenue raised from the stores allows for the continuation of vital services Vinnies runs across the country. Retail volunteer roles include Retail Assistant and Donation Sorting volunteers.

## APPEALS

Regular financial donations play a crucial role in our ability to help 1.3 million people each year.

**VINNIES WINTER APPEAL** - The Winter Appeal will provide emergency relief to people at risk and people experiencing homelessness. Your donation will help our Vinnies volunteers to rebuild lives.

**VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL** - Vinnies continues to rebuild strength in the men and women experiencing disadvantage this Christmas.

**VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT** - As our headline event the Vinnies CEO Sleepout aims to get some of Australia's highest profile business people involved in raising funds for Vinnies and raising awareness about homelessness. In 2018, a record 6.8 million dollars was raised to help break the cycle of homelessness and poverty in Australia.

**VINNIES COMMUNITY SLEEPOUTS** - You don't have to be in business to hold a sleepout – anyone can hold a Community Sleepout. Funds raised through the Sleepout directly assist people experiencing homelessness and fund new projects.

**VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUTS** – School Sleepouts are ideally suited for schools seeking ways to raise awareness of social justice issues among students.





# QUEENSLAND

## DONATING GOODS

Donating to Vinnies will always be fashionable! Your good quality clothes, books, music and bric-a-brac will support Australians doing it tough and reduce landfill. Do your part for our planet and give your clothes a second life by donating to Vinnies.

Vinnies shops resource local conference activities, providing clothing or furniture free of charge to struggling families or individuals identified through the home visitation process. Goods donated at Vinnies shops assist this process but remaining stock is also sold to the public at reasonable prices to generate revenue which helps fund the Society's work within the community.

You can drop off your thoughtful donations of good quality clothes and goods to your local Vinnies shop. Please be mindful that most shops are unable to accept electrical appliances (for legal and safety reasons). Please also note that most of our shops do not accept mattresses.

## VINNIES YOUTH

Vinnies Youth is the term given to young adult members and volunteers of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Getting involved in Vinnies Youth is about putting faith in action – we offer a number of opportunities to serve people in your local community. These include: Kids Days Out, Buddy Camps, Home Visitation, Tutoring and Mentoring, Vinnies Shops, Soup Vans and even school engagement.

One common way people get involved in Vinnies Youth is by joining a conference – a group of vibrant and talented people, who meet regularly to plan activities, reflect on social justice, pray and support each other in the work they do.

## PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Mini Vinnies empowers primary school students to become advocates within their school and local community by putting their values into action. They meet regularly to learn about social justice issues, develop leadership skills and engage with the wider St Vincent de Paul Society.

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Secondary School Conferences empower students to recognise, reflect and respond to causes of human injustice through advocacy and action in their local communities. They meet regularly to explore ways of achieving a more just and compassionate society, develop leadership skills and engage with the wider St Vincent de Paul Society.



## BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

***“I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity.”***

Antoine-Frederic Ozanam was born on April 23rd, 1813, in Milan, which was then occupied by the French. The Ozanam family moved to Lyon, France when Frederic was very young. He was one of twelve children, however only four of the children survived infancy. His sister Elizabeth, to whom Frederic was particularly devoted, died at the age of nineteen when he was seven years old. His father was a doctor, who divided his time between the city hospital and the slums of his parish where he tended to the medical needs of poor people. His mother was similarly tireless in assisting those in need, particularly as a member of the ‘Workers’, who provided company and comfort to sick, poor people.

At the age of six, Frederic became severely ill with typhoid fever. His recovery from illness was attributed to the intervention of St. John Francis Regis. When he was 15, Frederic suffered a period of doubt as his faith was tested. He promised God that, should he be given the light to see the Truth, he would spend his life defending it. With the support of his religion and philosophy teacher at the College de Lyon, Abbe Noiroi, his doubts disappeared and he began to fulfil his promise. In 1831, he moved to Paris to study law at the University of the Sorbonne.

***“It is our vocation to set people’s hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on earth in order to set it ablaze with His love.”***

During his time at the University, Frederic’s belief continued to be tested, as Christianity was often

ridiculed in early 19th century France. Lecturers at the Sorbonne would attack Church teachings and Catholic students were unwilling to speak up. Seeing this injustice, Frederic decided to establish a Catholic discussion club where Catholic students would meet each week to discuss Church matters and other relevant issues.

The meetings expanded and they began to discuss topics on Literature, History and Philosophy. Originally only Catholic students attended, but the meetings were open to all students.

***“Let us learn, first of all, to defend our belief without hating our adversaries, to appreciate those who do not think as we do, to recognize that there are Christians in every camp, and that God can be served now as always! Let us complain less of our times and more of ourselves. Let us not be discouraged, let us be better.”***



**Young Blessed Frederic Ozanam**

## BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

The young Catholics were articulate and passionate spokesmen for their faith but other students asked them, “what is the Church doing for the poor of Paris?”<sup>1</sup> In response, Ozanam and his companions determined to establish what they called a ‘Conference of Charity’. Immediately following this decision, Frederic and his friend Auguste Le Taillandier brought what was left of their own firewood to a destitute person in the neighbourhood. This was the very first act of ‘good works’ of the St Vincent de Paul Society (though it wasn’t called this just yet).

Frederic and the other Catholic students realised that they would need guidance to be able to best assist the poor in Paris. They sought help from Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, who provided them with the addresses of families in difficulty. The group started by bringing these families some bread, wood and above all, friendship. The financial resources for these good works came primarily from the students’ own savings from their scholarships.

***“Help honours when to the bread that nourishes it adds the visit that consoles, the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up the sinking courage; when it treats the poor man with respect not only as an equal but as a superior, since he is suffering what perhaps we are incapable of suffering; since he is the messenger of God to us, sent to prove our justice and our charity; and to save us by our works.”***

The Conference of Charity held its first official meeting in May 1833, when Frederic suggested the group work under the guidance of a patron saint. He suggested St Vincent de Paul, and thus

the group changed their name to The Society of St Vincent de Paul. The aim of the Society was not just to provide food and wood, but to work to change the social structures that caused poverty in the first place. The Society began to expand throughout France at this time. By the end of 1838, the St Vincent de Paul Society totalled over 2,000 members.

***“Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. But, it is justice’s role to prevent the attacks.”***

Frederic’s father died in May 1837. While organising the affairs of his father, Frederic noticed that the Ozanam family finances were surprisingly meagre. It was later discovered that Dr Ozanam had given his services free to almost a third of his practice. Frederic saw his father as a true example of St Vincent de Paul’s message. Frederic married Amélie Soulacroix, daughter of the rector of the Lyons Academy, on June 23rd, 1841 and in 1845 their daughter Marie was born.

Frederic’s ongoing work with the Society, which included fund raising for the relief of the Irish Famine, and his writing in defence of the Church, all contributed to a steady deterioration in his precarious health. Seriously ill with pleurisy in 1846, he suffered a complete breakdown in 1847 which forced him to spend a period of prolonged rest in Italy. While in Italy, Frederic established a number of St Vincent de Paul Conferences.

***“The question which is agitating the world today is a social one. It is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. It is a violent clash of opulence and poverty which is shaking the ground***

## BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

***under our feet. Our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these two camps in order to accomplish by love, what justice alone cannot do.***

The 1848 French Revolution saw the end of the reign of Louis-Philippe (1830-1848) and the establishment of the Second Republic.

Under pressure from friends, Ozanam agreed to stand for the Rhone department in the election for the National Assembly, held under universal suffrage for the first time. Several ideas which formed part of his policy platform were visionary. He is considered one of the first to formulate the idea of a 'natural salary', to claim compensation against unemployment and accidents, and to suggest that pensions be guaranteed to workers. Forty-three years later, in 1891, many



**Blessed Frederic Ozanam**

of his ideas were to be found in Leo XIII's papal encyclical 'Rerum Novarum' (Of New Things). However, the electors of 1848 considered them to be too generous and daring and his foray into politics was unsuccessful. In early 1849 Ozanam, accompanied by one hundred and twelve Society members, cared for two thousand people struck down by the dreaded scourge of cholera which swept through Paris.

***“Charity must never look to the past, but always to the future, because the number of its past works is still very small and the present and future miseries that it must alleviate are infinite.”***

The Society was never far from his mind. Wherever he travelled, Ozanam either visited and encouraged existing conferences or founded new ones.

Early in 1852, Frederic's health was deteriorating. On the 8th of September, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, his struggle finally ended.

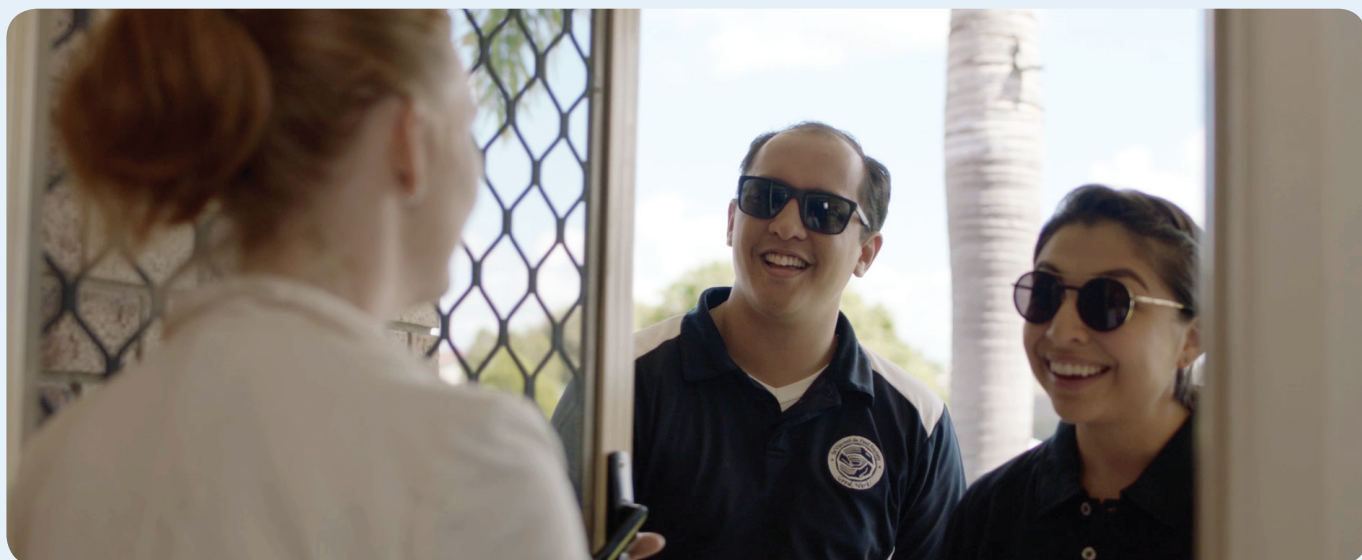
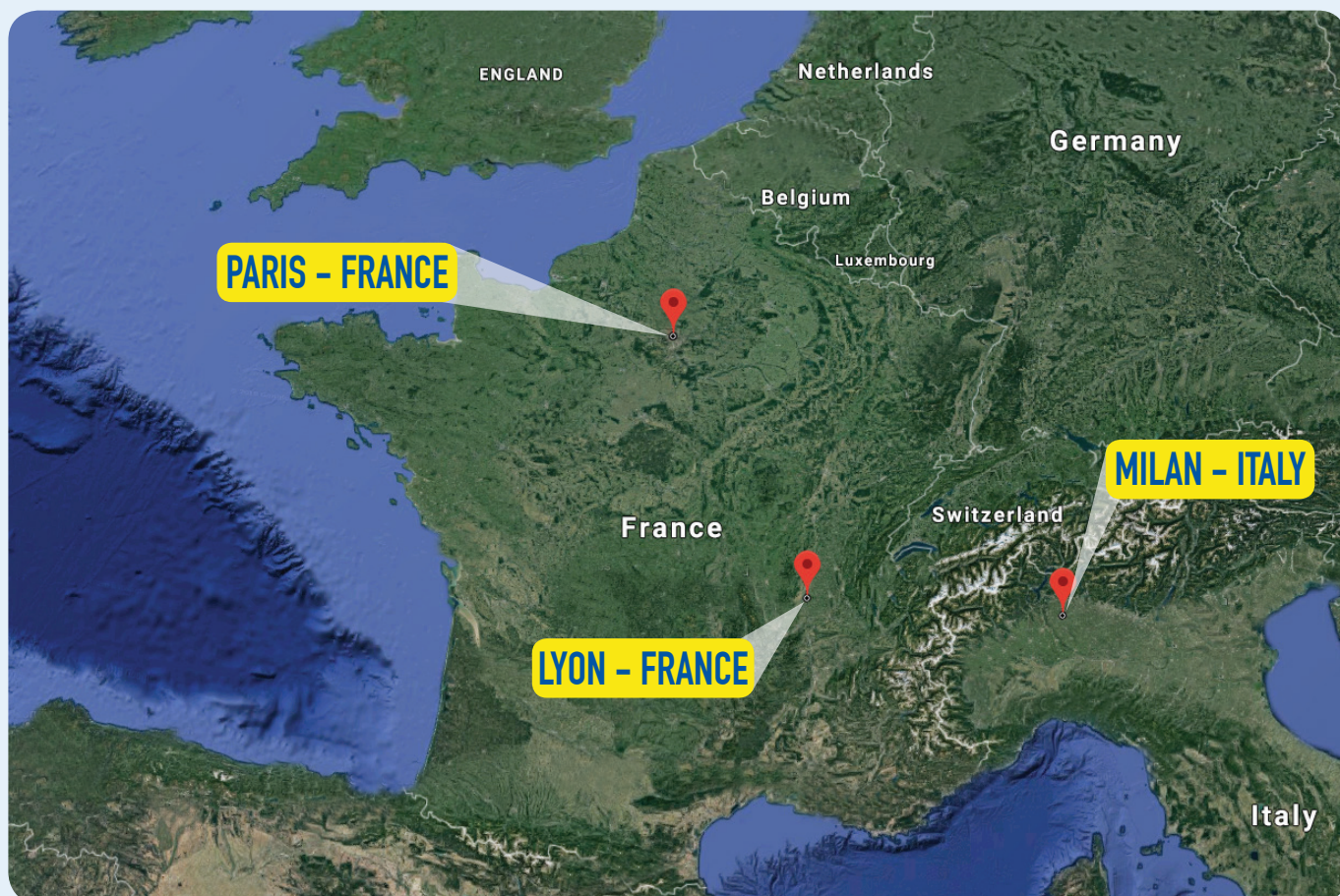
In 1983, in a speech marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Society, the Pope declared that we should 'thank God for the gift he has made to the Church in the person of Ozanam.

We are amazed by all that was undertaken for the Church, for society, for the poor, by this student, this professor, this father of a family, of intense faith and inventive charity, during the course of a life too quickly consumed. How could we not wish that the Church should also place Ozanam among the blessed and the saints?'<sup>2</sup> Pope John-Paul II proclaimed him 'venerable' by the decree of July 6th, 1993, on the 'heroicity of his virtues'. Four years later, following the recognition by the Pope of a miracle obtained through the intercession of Ozanam, he was beatified by the Pope at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris on August 22nd, 1997.

## BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

*“Why are poor people more ready to share their goods than rich people? The answer is easy: The poor have little to lose; the rich have more to lose and they are more attached to their possessions. Poverty provides a*

*deeper motivation for understanding your neighbours, welcoming others and attending to those who are suffering. I would go so far as to say that poverty helps you understand what happiness is, what serenity is in life.”*



St Vincent De Paul Society Conference members making a home visit.

## BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU

***“Never have I prayed so well as in the streets.”***

Rosalie Rendu (born Jeanne Marie Rendu) was born on the 9th of September, 1786 in Confort, France. She was just three years old when the French Revolution broke out. In 1790, during the French Revolution, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy law was passed. It required all clergy to take an oath of support for the Civil Constitution. Many priests refused and had to hide to escape persecution. The Rendu home became one such refuge for these priests.<sup>3</sup> Rosalie was educated in this environment of solid faith.

At the age of 10, after the death of her father, Rosalie was sent to the Ursuline Sisters in Gex. She stayed in this boarding school for two years. While in Gex, she noticed the hospital where the Daughters of Charity cared for the sick and she immediately wanted to join them. God’s call for Rosalie was to become a Daughter of Charity.

***“If you want someone to love you, you must be the first to love; and if you have nothing to give, give yourself.”***

In May 1802, Rosalie arrived at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. She was soon sent to the house of the Daughters of Charity in the Mouffetard District to serve the poor. Rosalie remained there for 54 years.

The Mouffetard District was the poorest district of Paris, with residents suffering physically, psychologically and spiritually. Disease often spread through the slums where many people were living, making survival a daily struggle.

***“There are many ways of providing charity. The assistance of money or assistance in-kind that we give to the poor will not last long. We must aspire to a more***

***complete and longer lasting benefit: study their abilities, their level of instruction and try to get them work to help them out of their difficulties.”***

In 1807, Rosalie made vows for the first time to serve God and the poor. In 1815 she became Superior of the Community at rue des Francs Bourgeois. More and more people were falling into poverty at this time. In her role as Superior, Rosalie sent her fellow Sisters to take supplies, clothing, care and company to the poor.

In addition, to further help the destitute of Paris, she opened a free clinic, a pharmacy, a school, an orphanage, a child care centre, a youth club for young workers and a home for the elderly. Rosalie was establishing a whole network of charitable services.



**Blessed Rosalie Rendu**

## BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU

***“God has already touched your heart, or you would not be giving up your precious free day to serve the poor. And, because you see Christ in his poor, I know you will approach each one you visit with humility as His servant... be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.”***

Her example encouraged her Sisters. She was so simple, and lived so poorly, as to let the presence of God shine through her. She daily experienced the conviction of St. Vincent: “You will go and visit the poor ten times a day, and ten times a day you will find God there ... you go into their poor homes, but you find God there.”<sup>iii</sup> She also followed the gospel message of Jesus Christ with regards to treatment of the poor. She saw the poor as her masters, saying “Remember, Our Lord hides behind those rags.”

***“Let us accept all that comes our way. God will send us enough money and enough goods, provided we use them well.”***

As well as caring for the poor, Rosalie had a significant role in the formation of young Sisters. Often, Sisters who were fragile or difficult were sent to Rosalie. At this time, she had developed a reputation as a providence of the poor, with word spreading to all districts of Paris, as well as surrounding towns. Rosalie was never short of donations, as the rich of Paris were unable to resist her persuasion. Others who wished to assist the poor, including Frederic Ozanam, would first seek help from Rosalie, to find out where to go and who to help. It was in 1833 that she first began mentoring Frederic Ozanam and the other members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. She would provide them with food and the addresses of families and others in need. Rosalie became the centre of the charitable movement that flourished in France during the 19th century.

***“Hunt down poverty in order to give humanity its dignity.”***



**Blessed Rosalie Rendu**

## BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU

Paris was struck by cholera epidemics during the 1830s and 1840s. The dedication shown by Rosalie and her Sisters was admirable, and Rosalie herself was seen picking up dead bodies in the streets. During uprisings and revolutions, she would help wounded fighters on both sides, putting herself in danger in the process.

In 1852, Napoleon III awarded Rosalie the Cross of the Legion of Honor. Rosalie was often in poor health due to her dedication to helping the poor and never taking time to rest. During the last two years of her life she became progressively blind and on the 7th of February 1856, she died after a brief but acute illness.

Rosalie was declared Venerable on the 24th of April 2001 and on the 9th of November 2003 she was beatified by Pope John Paul II after a miracle was attributed to her intercession. The miracle concerned Sr. Therese Bequet. She began to notice pain in her joints in 1942, which left her an invalid. Doctors could not make a precise

diagnosis but affirmed that it was a serious, progressive illness. In 1952, the entire community prayed to Rosalie and Sr. Therese Bequet made a full, inexplicable recovery from her illness.

Pope John Paul II spoke of Rosalie in his homily on the day of her beatification:

*“In an era troubled by social conflicts, Rosalie Rendu joyfully became a servant to the poorest, restoring dignity to each one by means of material help, education and the teaching of the Christian mystery, inducing Frédéric Ozanam to place himself at the service of the poor. Her charity was inventive. Where did she draw the strength to carry out so many things? From her intense prayer life and the continuous praying of the Rosary, which she never abandoned. Her secret was simple: to see the face of Christ in every man and woman, as a true daughter of St Vincent de Paul and like another Sister of her epoch, St Catherine Labouré. Let us give thanks for the witness of charity that the Vincentian family gives unceasingly to the world!”<sup>iii</sup>*



**Blessed Rosalie Rendu**



# BLESSED ROSALIE RENDU



Blessed Rosalie Rendu during an uprising in Paris



## ST VINCENT DE PAUL

***“The service of the poor should be preferred to everything else.”***

Vincent de Paul was born on the 24th of April 1581 in Pouy, France. Vincent was born into a peasant family, who had to work hard to make ends meet. At the age of 15, he was sent to a seminary by his father. Early in his life, one of Vincent's chief motivations for becoming a priest was to earn enough money to retire early and provide for his family.<sup>4</sup> He was ordained on the 23rd of September 1600, when he was just 19. He graduated from the University of Toulouse in 1604 with a Bachelor of Theology.

In 1605, Vincent sailed from Marseilles on his way back from Castres where he had gone to sell some property he had received in an inheritance, and was allegedly taken captive by Barbary pirates, who brought him to Tunis. De Paul was auctioned off as a slave to the highest bidder, and spent two years in bondage. According to Vincent's letters, he was bought and sold 3 times. His third master was a former priest. He was released in 1607.

***“Our vocation is to go not into one parish, nor into only one diocese, but throughout the earth. And to do what? To inflame the hearts of men. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbour does not love him as well.”***

After continuing his studies in Rome, Vincent returned to Paris in 1609. While in Paris, he met Pierre de Bérulle (who became a cardinal in 1627). Berulle was to become Vincent's spiritual advisor and he sent Vincent as parish priest to the Church of Saint-Medard in Clichy.<sup>5</sup> However, less than a year later Berulle recalled him to Paris to serve as

a chaplain and tutor to the Gondi family.<sup>6</sup>

It was while preaching missions to the peasants on the Gondi estates that Vincent was convinced that he should direct his efforts to the poor. His original motivation of joining the priesthood for money was overtaken by the calling he felt to help the poor. At this time, Vincent was founding conferences of charity in numerous communes around France.<sup>vi</sup>

***“If there are any among us who think they are in the mission to evangelize the poor people but not to alleviate their sufferings, to take of their spiritual needs but not their temporal ones, I reply that we have to help them and have them assisted in every way, by us and by others.”***

In 1622 Vincent was appointed chaplain to the galleys. The convicts on the galleys had minimal



**St Vincent de Paul**

## ST VINCENT DE PAUL

food and were covered with vermin and ulcers. Vincent's aim was to help alleviate both their physical and moral misery.<sup>vi</sup> He also went and did the same for the galley convicts of Marseilles and Bordeaux. In 1625, Vincent gathered together some other priests and founded the Congregation of Priests of the Mission. They were to continue his work of preaching to the poor country people on the Gondi estates, pledging to, "aggregate and associate to ourselves and to the aforesaid work to live together as a Congregation...and to devote ourselves to the salvation of the poor country folk."<sup>vi</sup> To ensure that these missions could continue, Vincent set to work establishing seminaries to train more priests.

Vincent then went on to establish the Daughters of Charity in 1633. Many women were coming to assist the conferences of charity that Vincent had founded in Paris, however they did not know how to care for the poor properly. Vincent then came up with the idea of enlisting good young women for service of the poor. Among them were as many as 200 ladies of the highest rank. It was due to these women that Vincent was able to collect large sums of money to use in his works. As the number of women increased, Vincent grouped them into a community under the direction of Louise de Marillac. Louise was responsible for recruiting, forming and directing the women.



St Vincent de Paul and the Daughters of Charity

# ST VINCENT DE PAUL

These women were the first members of the Daughters of Charity. Among the works of the Daughters of Charity were:

- Foundation of schools, hospitals and homes for orphaned children;
- Visiting prisoners;
- Job training;
- Setting up soup kitchens;
- Teaching children.

***“We should assist the poor in every way and do it both by ourselves and by enlisting the help of others... To do this is to preach the gospel by words and work.”***

On the 13th of May 1643, Queen Anne nominated Vincent de Paul as her spiritual adviser. His role was to assist the Queen with religious policy and the issue of Jansenism.

Vincent spent the remainder of his life continuing his good works with the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, while assisting Queen Anne. One of his well-known mottos was ‘TOTUM OPUS NOSTRUM IN OPERATIONE CONSISTIT’, which means ‘action is our entire task’. He died in Paris on the 27th of September 1660. At Vincent’s funeral, the preacher declared that Vincent had just about “transformed the face of the Church”.<sup>7</sup>

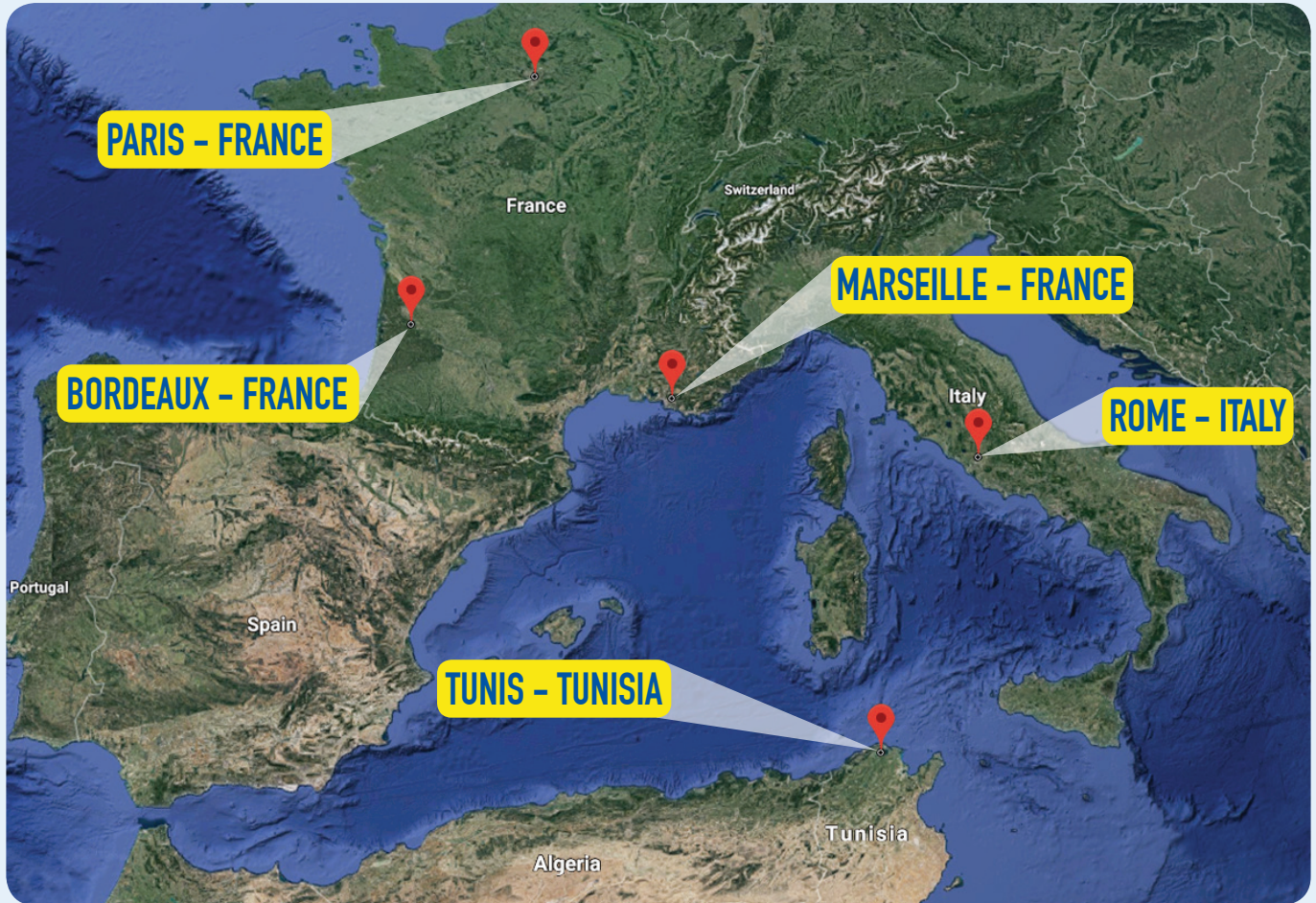
***“How much our hearts should be on fire with love for this ministry of assisting poor people and for devoting ourselves earnestly to it because the need is so great and God expects this of us.”***

On the 13th of August 1729, Vincent was declared Blessed by Pope Benedict XIII and he was canonized 8 years later by Pope Clement XII.



**St Vincent de Paul**

# ST VINCENT DE PAUL



This was a result of two miracles being attributed to St. Vincent. The first miracle was a nun whom St. Vincent cured of ulcers and the second was a woman cured of paralysis.

Today, St. Vincent de Paul is recognised as the patron saint of charity. More than 500 congregations or communities today declare themselves followers of St. Vincent de Paul.



St Vincent de Paul medallion

***“You will find out that Charity is a heavy burden to carry, heavier than the kettle of soup and the full basket. But you will keep your gentleness and your smile. It is not enough to give soup and bread. This the rich can do. You are the servant of the poor, always smiling and good-humoured. They are your masters, terribly sensitive and exacting master you will see. And the uglier and the dirtier they will be, the more unjust and insulting, the more love you must give them. It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them.”***

## ST LOUISE DE MARILLAC

***“Be sure that you are not depriving your poor of anything. Always look to their needs so that you can give them the best you have, because it belongs to them.”***

Louise de Marillac was born on the 12th of August 1591 in Le Meux, France. The de Marillac family was prominent and Louise’s father, Louis, was Lord of Ferrieres. Unfortunately Louise’s mother passed away when she was quite young and when Louise’s father remarried, his new wife did not accept Louise as part of her family. Thus, Louise grew up among the rich of Paris, but her home life was unstable.

She was schooled among the country’s elite and was introduced to a deep spiritual life at the royal monastery of Poissy. Louise would remain at Poissy until the death of her father in 1604. From this time, Louise stayed with a devout spinster who taught her household management skills and the secrets of herbal medicine. At the age of fifteen, Louise became drawn to the cloistered life. She had applied to the Capuchin nuns but was refused admission, being assured that God had other plans for her.<sup>8</sup>

***“I felt a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord and I desired to honour and imitate it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and of all my neighbours.”***

In 1613, Louise married Antoine Le Gras, who was secretary to Queen Marie. Later that year,

they had their only child, Michel. Louise became very devoted to her family and was also active in ministry in her parish. She held a leadership role in the Ladies of Charity, an organisation of wealthy women dedicated to assisting the poor. Antoine fell severely ill in 1623, causing Louise great sadness. At this time, she wrote “...while I was praying in the church, my mind was completely freed of all doubt. I was advised that I should remain with my husband and that the time would come when I would be in the position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same.”<sup>9</sup> During this prayer, she received insight that she would meet a spiritual director, whose face she was shown in a vision.



**St Louise de Marillac**

# ST LOUISE DE MARILLAC

***“As for your conduct towards the sick never take the attitude of just getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; enquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or too eager.”***

Antoine passed away in 1625, and it was around this time that Louise met Vincent de Paul. When she met Vincent, she recognised that he was the priest she saw in her vision. Vincent’s work with the Confraternities of Charity needed many more helpers and he needed someone who could teach and organise these helpers. During the next few years, Vincent and Louise communicated regularly and in 1629, Vincent invited her to be part of his work with the Confraternities of Charity. Louise was greatly successful in her works. In 1632, Louise made a spiritual retreat seeking guidance regarding her next step. During the retreat, she decided she should further her works with the poor. She told Vincent of this desire and by the end of 1633 they jointly founded the Daughters of Charity.

***“Above all, be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care.”***

The Daughters of Charity recruited both rich and poor women. “The practical work of nursing the poor in their own homes, caring for neglected children and dealing with often rough husbands and fathers, was best accomplished by women of

a similar social status to the principal sufferers. The aristocratic ladies were better suited to the work of raising money and dealing with correspondence.”<sup>10</sup> Under the leadership and guidance of Louise, the Daughters of Charity furthered their services to include orphanages, institutions for the elderly and mentally ill, prisons and the battlefield.

***“How fortunate you are, my dear sisters to have so many sick to serve! Oh how evident it is that God loves you since he provides you with so many opportunities to serve Him! Continue to do so, I beg you, for love of Him, with all the gentleness, concern and charity required of you.”***

Nearing her death, she wrote to her nuns: “Take good care of the service of the poor. Above all, live together in great union and cordiality, loving one another in imitation of the union and life of our Lord. Pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin, that she might be your only Mother.”<sup>11</sup> Louise’s health was always of concern to Vincent. She fell seriously ill in 1656, but to everyone’s surprise gradually recovered. She fell ill again and on the 15th of March 1660, Louise passed away, just six months before the death of St Vincent de Paul. Louise was 68 at the time of her death and at this time the Daughters of Charity had established more than 40 houses in France.

Louise de Marillac was beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1920 and, on the 11th of March 1934, she was canonized by Pope Pius XI. She is now known as the patron saint of social workers. A number of miracles have been attributed to Louise de Marillac. One miracle was the cure of a young Breton who was suffering from a medically incurable disease which was complicated by

## ST LOUISE DE MARILLAC

meningitis and deafness. After praying to Louise de Marillac, he was instantly cured. A second miracle involved a young Daughter of Charity who had dislocated two vertebrae. She was suffering extreme pain and vomiting of blood. Many other sisters began a novena to Louise de Marillac and on the final day of the novena, the pain disappeared completely.

*“For the love of God, my dear Sister, practice great gentleness toward the poor and toward everyone. Try to satisfy as much by words as by actions. That will be very easy for you if you maintain great esteem for your neighbour: the rich because they are above you, the poor because they are your masters.”*



St Louise de Marillac





## FR GERALD WARD

Gerald Ward was born in 1806 in London, England. He was ordained as a priest in England in 1839 and worked as a parish priest in different areas for the next 10 years. The St Vincent de Paul Society, founded in Paris in 1833, had been established in England in 1844. By 1849, there were 14 conferences in England and Wales. It is almost certain that Fr Ward would have been aware of the activities of the Society as the Society had greatly assisted Irish immigrants who were escaping famine in Ireland and had settled in London's slums.<sup>12</sup>

Private charities, mostly church based, had been established in Melbourne in the 1840s. It was these charities that assisted the poor and vulnerable at this time. Melbourne had a rapidly expanding population of immigrant Catholics but a shortage of priests. A recruitment drive was started by Melbourne's bishop, Dr James Goold. Gerald Ward was one of the priests that arrived in Melbourne as a result of this recruitment. He arrived on the 7th of September, 1850.



**Fr Gerald Ward**

***“The gold mania has upset everything. The city of Melbourne, Geelong, in fact all the settlements present a most deserted appearance – scarcely a working man to be seen – all to Ballarat, Buninyong. A great deal of distress begins to prevail in consequence among the wives and children left behind.”***  
– Fr Geogeghan

In 1851, Fr Ward was appointed as pastor at Geelong. Geelong was an extensive parish, with a Catholic population of 1,565. It was at this time that the gold rush began, with cities being deserted in favour of seeking fortune on the goldfields. There was a sharp rise in overseas immigration due to the gold rush and by 1854 Geelong's population was 20,106. Fr Ward had to serve the increasing Catholic community, as well as attempt to find teachers for the Geelong schools.

In 1853, Fr Ward was transferred to Williamstown to take charge of the new mission. At this time, it was considered the “poorest district in the colony.”<sup>14</sup> In the bay, there were five prison ships housing hardened criminals. The prisoners were treated very poorly and one of Fr Ward's main duties was visiting the ships and attending to the spiritual needs of the convicts. It was challenging and draining work. He also took on the job of enlarging the school in Williamstown.

Soon after, Fr Ward was transferred back to the Melbourne mission. Melbourne was in chaos as the city tried to cope with a population of over 100,000. Despite the rapidly increasing population, there was a labour shortage.

As a result, expenses soared, with rent rising more than five-fold and food tripling in price.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the water supply was inadequate, sanitation was poor and there was a lack of sewerage.

## FR GERALD WARD

To try to relieve the shortage of accommodation, a ‘tent city’ was erected where up to 7,000 homeless immigrants, often mothers and children, lived.

***“Its [the Conference’s] objects ... comprise sundry works of charity, but more especially the relief of the destitute, in a manner, as much as possible, permanently beneficial and the visitation of poor families.”***

Conditions began to improve in 1854, but there was a significant problem of homeless and deserted children roaming the streets.

Fr Ward knew something had to be done.

The St Vincent de Paul Society had been expanding throughout the world and at this time was present in 28 countries with over 1,500 conferences.<sup>16</sup>

On the 5th of March, 1854, Fr Ward presided over the first meeting of an Australian conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society – the Conference of Melbourne. Ward suggested the main reason why the conference was formed was ‘for the protection of male and female orphans.’ This had been a significant problem in Melbourne over the years. In its first year of existence, the Conference of Melbourne relieved 179 cases.

One of the first cases concerned William Sherry and his wife Margaret. William and Margaret had both passed away on the same day due to “congestion of the brain produced by constant intoxication.”<sup>17</sup> As a result, five children were orphaned. The eldest child was aged eleven and the youngest was only two. The two girls were placed in the care of Mrs Maria Chidley, who had lost her own child. Fr Ward was now faced with the task of housing the three boys. In August a cottage was rented in Prahran to house the boys

and to care for others who had been brought to the attention of the conference. Over time two other houses were added to form a little orphanage, with a garden attached. From here thirteen orphans, including five girls, were entirely provided for. The children received a proper formal education, and moral and physical training at the local Catholic Denominational School. This was the first special work of the Society in Australia, established mainly from Fr Ward’s own resources.<sup>18</sup>

***“May this aforesaid building be a refuge for orphans, a product of the folly of man and the fearful happenings and dangers of a perverse world.”***

***– Inscription on the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage***

In 1855, it was proposed that a Catholic orphanage be built at Emerald Hill.

Fr Ward indicated that the orphanage at Emerald Hill was to be run the same way as one in Paris which had existed for 150 years. On October the 7th, 1855, the foundation stone of the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage was laid. The Orphanage was operating by 1857 and in 1858 it was housing 60 children.

By 1857, many men were drifting back to the city in the aftermath of the gold rush. This caused an increase in unemployment and forced many residents to live in slums. Members of the Conference of Melbourne now had more people to assist. Unfortunately, Fr Ward’s health was deteriorating rapidly at this time and he passed away on the 14th of January, 1858. Newspapers praised the work of Fr Ward, in particular his “untiring exertions on behalf of the orphan and destitute.”<sup>19</sup>

## FR GERALD WARD

*“This pious, zealous and unostentatious priest was noted for his most active benevolence and practice of charity, numerous, unassuming, and it may be said, universal. He was endeared to all who knew him, by the kindly simplicity of his generous heart, and geniality of his disposition, and the fervid anxiety he evinced for the poor of the mission. He suffered from a protracted illness that impeded him in his work for the orphan and the helpless. He was a great follower of St Vincent de Paul.”*

– *The Freeman’s Journal*<sup>20</sup>



Collingwood, Melbourne Slum



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