

Vinnies

is a lay catholic organisation which provides emergency relief to those in need.

Where?

The Suburb of Blackburn South.

How?

We have sensational regular support from the Parish of St Luke the Evangelist through food and money donations that complement our fundraising as well as our Parish School's annual Feast of the Sacred Heart in June. The Annual Christmas & Winter Appeals provide opportunities for further practical support throughout the year. Fr Gerard and the Parish Pastoral Council are equally supportive. The monthly donations from our Church Poor Box are always well received and are put to good use.

Some of us also officiate at weekend Masses in a 'meet and greet' capacity.

We have also offered to assist any parishioners who may require assistance on a strictly confidential basis.

What do we do with Donations?

The Call Centre at our head office emails individual conferences up to 4 client visits a day and we are 1 of 294 Victorian conferences. In the last financial year Vinnies assisted some 660,000 Victorians and all are treated in the strictest of confidence.

We provide:

- food and supermarket vouchers for Vinnies, Woolies & Coles.
- twice weekly bread run.
- our food pantry is in our Parish Church Foyer.
- furniture, bed and kitchen suites. It's not uncommon to visit someone in new accommodation who have very few possessions.
- assistance with bills and rent.
- financial counselling is referred. When you're on a disability pension of \$570 per fortnight you really need to know how to budget.
- You don't have to be poor to be poor. I'm talking about loneliness. Sometimes a friendly face and a chat is very welcome.
- Our **assistance hotline is 1800 305 330 (Freecall: Mon. - Fri. 10am - 3pm)**

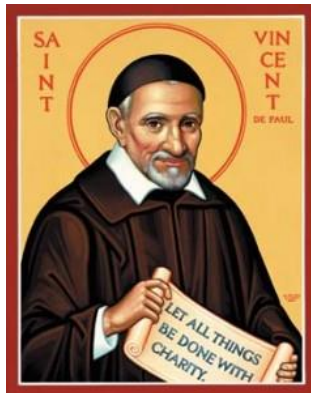
When?

We meet fortnightly on **Saturday mornings at 9.30am** in our Parish School Staff Room; *via Zoom currently*. We have a set agenda which starts and ends with prayers.

Each fortnight a Conference member is asked to provide a spiritual reading which includes Fr Gerard our spiritual advisor.

The President and Treasurer provide reports and we discuss visitations for the week and any follow up to keep informed and to educate each other on how we can do our role better.

Steve Kilroe-Smith and Tony Lobo are our current Co-Presidents of our local Conference.



A Brief Word on The Society's Founder: Blessed Frederic Ozanam

"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 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".

Those words, spoken in 1834 by the Founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam, remain accurate in today's world. Frederic was 20 years old when he began the Society with a number of friends in Paris on April 23, 1833. He made that defining statement a year later. It encompasses the spiritual ethos of the Society and its focus on working for social justice. The name of St. Vincent de Paul was chosen for the new Society as its patron saint. From the outset the Society favoured a practical, direct approach to dealing with poverty. Frederic Ozanam laid down the instruction that SVP members must give of themselves, through their time, talents and resources to help the poor:

"The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect," he said and instructed SVP volunteers: *"You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis. **You must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long-term improvement.**"*



Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Date of birth: 23 April 1813

Place of birth: Milan, Italy

Died: 8 September 1853

Beatified: 22 August 1997

Feast Day: 9 September

Paris of the early 19th century was in the grip of great upheavals. During and following the French revolution 1788-1799, Paris was profoundly affected by social unrest. A new type of society was being formed - a republic based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

The 1830s brought the collapse of the old Bourbon monarchy which had dreams of strengthening the throne with the support from the Church. Religion was on the decline and atheism increasing; scepticism was virtually triumphant in the teachings of Saint Simon.

Large numbers of the country people were moving to the cities to find work in the factories. Many arrived to discover that there was no work, little pay or that the factories were closed due to revolution.

In 1832 an epidemic of cholera swept through Paris killing up to 1200 people each day. Large slums areas were forming in Paris; thousands of people lived without work, some without clothes, and many alcoholic. Homelessness, disease, and starvation were common.

A young student, Frederic Ozanam had to walk through the poorer suburbs on his way to university lectures each day and he soon became deeply moved at the hopeless state of families who had been left without the support of their breadwinners after the epidemic.

It was the taunt of an anti-religious opponent in a debating society founded by the students that stung him to action:

"You are right Ozanam when you speak of the past! In former times Christianity worked wonders, but what is it doing for mankind now? And you, who pride yourself on your Catholicity, what are you doing now for the poor? Show us your works"

Frederic Ozanam gathered a few friends around him and on 23 April 1833, they met to decide what they could do to assist the poor. After the meeting Frederic and his flat mate took the remainder of their winter wood supply and gave it to a widow. These young men attracted the comment "What can seven young men hope to achieve in alleviating the suffering of Paris?" Fortunately Ozanam paid little heed to their comments, determined to satisfy his own conscience that he was doing what he could to bear witness to his Christian upbringing by assisting those less fortunate in the community.

The small group decided to adopt the name The Society of St Vincent de Paul after the Patron Saint of Christian charity. They sought the advice of [Sister Rosalie Rendu](#), a Daughter of Charity who was visiting poor families in one of the poorer districts. Sr Rendu introduced the young men to people they could assist. They agreed to meet weekly to strengthen their friendship and to respond to the needs of those they served.

It was not long after that other good citizens of Paris took note of the charitable works of the students. Within a year membership had expanded to 100 and it became necessary to split the conference (group) into three separate conferences. At the same time other conferences sprang up in Parishes around Paris. In its first decade the Society spread to 48 other cities in France and Italy and numbered over 9,000 members. After some years the Society reached Rome (1842), England (1844), Belgium, Scotland, Ireland (1845), the United States of America (1846) and Australia on 5 March 1854.

Until 1963 women were organised separately throughout the world as the 'Womans Society of St. Vincent de Paul', with headquarters in Bologna, Italy. It was founded in 1856 to render charitable aid to the afflicted in matters which men could not handle such as the care of widows, orphan girls and mothers with small families. After a trial period the women's Society was amalgamated with the men's Society in 1967.

[Internationally the Society](#) now admits both men and women with equal responsibility.



St Louise de Marillac

Date of birth: 12 August 1591

Place of birth: Paris, France

Died: 15 March 1660

Canonized: 1934

Feast Day: Since 2016, it has been celebrated on 9 May, the day of her beatification in 1920.

Louise did not know her mother and was raised by her father. From the time she was a small child, she was taken to the Dominican sisters, who gave her a good education. Later, she went on to further education at a residence for young girls in Paris. Her education was much better than that of most children her age, and Louise became one of the best educated women of her time.

Louise had a desire to join a religious order, but she was not allowed to join. She married Antoine le Gras, secretary to the Queen Mother, in 1611. According to Louise, Antoine was a good man. Throughout their marriage, Louise travelled a lot and socialised with the royalty and aristocracy of France. Louise and Antoine had a son, Michael, and lived together happily for many years. Antoine, however, became sick, and he died in 1625.

After her husband died, Louise met and became friends with Vincent de Paul. Despite the fact that she had come from a background of wealth, and knew many rich people, she was just as comfortable around poor people. Louise dedicated her time to helping abandoned children on the streets. She also visited sick men in the prison hospital and established a house near the hospital where, each day, many women would cook food that visitors would then take to the prisoners.

Throughout France, women set up centres to serve the poor. Louise pushed for every village to have its own clinic, school nurse and teacher. With Vincent, Louise started the Daughters of Charity in 1642. The Daughters of Charity were a revolutionary order of the poor. They helped abandoned children, people who were poor and sick, wounded soldiers, slaves, people who were mentally ill and the elderly. Today, there are over 20,000 Daughters of Charity, and they continue to help people in need.

Louise is the patron saint of sick people, widows and orphans, and in 1960, Pope John XXIII proclaimed her the Patroness of Social Workers.



Fr Gerald Ward

Date of birth: 1806

Place of birth: London, England

Died: 14 January 1858

Gerald Ward was born in London 1806 and arrived in Australia on 7 September 1850 after being recruited to work in the Melbourne mission by the pioneer priest Fr Patrick Geoghegan.

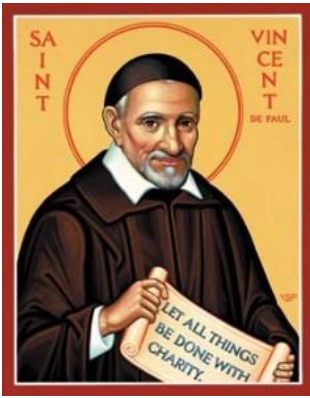
Fr Ward knew of the workings of the St Vincent de Paul Society and initiated its establishment in Australia at St Francis' Church in Melbourne on 5 March 1854 after witnessing the plight of people following the discovery of gold in Victoria.

Fr Ward became the first president of the St Francis' Conference in Melbourne and began to address the problems he saw such as the increased number of homeless and deserted children roaming the streets.

In a submission to the government of the day, Fr Ward stated that the new conference aimed at “the relief of the destitute, in a manner as much as possible permanently beneficial and the visitation of poor families.”

One of his accomplishments was establishing the St Vincent de Paul orphanage in South Melbourne. The foundation stone for the orphanage was laid in 1855 and the first children were accepted in 1857.

Gerald Ward died on 14 January 1858 aged 52. A newspaper noted that “he was one in whom many a widow and orphan had found a good friend.” His enduring legacy is founded in such friendship.



Saint Vincent de Paul

“Love the poor. Honour them, my children, as you would honour Christ himself”

Date of birth: 24 April 1581

Place of birth: Pouy, France

Died: 27 September 1660

Canonised a Saint: 16 June 1737

Feast Day: 27 September

Vincent de Paul was born in the small southern French town of Pouy (later renamed Saint Vincent de Paul in his honour) on 24 April 1581 and ordained as a priest in 1600 at the age of 19.

As a young man he ministered to the wealthy and powerful. However an appointment as chaplain to a poor parish, and to galley prisoners, inspired him to a vocation of working with those most marginalised and powerless.

Vincent urged his followers to bring God’s justice and love to people who were unable to live a full human life:

“Deal with the most urgent needs. Organise charity so that it is more efficient...teach reading and writing, educate with the aim of giving each the means of self-support. Intervene with authorities to obtain reforms in structure... there is no charity without justice.”

Vincent de Paul died in Paris on 27 September 1660 at the age of 79. He was canonised on 16 June 1737 and, in 1883, the Church designated him as the special patron of all charitable associations.

The Society was named after Saint Vincent de Paul and follows his teachings and compassion for people in need. Saint Vincent de Paul is the international patron of the Society.