

SAINTS ALIVE! SEPTEMBER 27: ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, PATRON SAINT OF VOLUNTEERS



St. Vincent de Paul was born in 1580 to a peasant family in France. Despite his poor upbringing, he became a priest of the Catholic Church who dedicated himself to serving the poor.

“I am for God and for the poor.”

St. Vincent’s spirituality was based on the encounter with Christ in the needs of one’s neighbor. He was not focused on charity but on the relationships with each other (through which other’s needs became apparent).

These words echo those of Pope Francis, “Serving means working beside the neediest of people, establishing with them first and foremost human relationships of closeness and bonds of solidarity.”

Though he began with the relationship, St. Vincent was adamant about meeting the needs of our neighbors, “A child can be killed in two ways: either by violent death or by refusing to feed him.”

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (or “Vincentians”) are men and women who strive to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to individuals in need. The Society began in France in 1833. (The first St. Vincent de Paul Conference on the West Coast was established in Portland, Oregon on October 9, 1869.)

The Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice.

Charity is necessary to meet the needs of the poor. **Social justice** attacks the root causes of poverty, to remove the safety net and replace it with a trampoline.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is concerned with alleviating need and with identifying those structures – societal and legislative – that cause and perpetuate poverty.

“Voice of the Poor (VOP) is the advocacy arm of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It identifies those issues that are critical to those living in poverty and need, and help bring attention to them so communities and our elected representatives can help develop strategies and tactics that will provide the most effective and efficient means to reduce or eliminate poverty.”

This September let us honor the memory of St. Vincent de Paul by donating a little more food, a little more money, or a little more time to your local St. Vincent de Paul food pantry.

This September let us also honor his memory by choosing one piece of legislation designed to reduce poverty, and writing a letter in support to your representatives.

St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.



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