



St Vincent  
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING





# Catholic Social Teaching: An Overview

In essence, Catholic Social Teaching is the application of Jesus' Way to society. At its core is Jesus' command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. While the principles have been elaborated at length, each one clearly relates to Jesus' teaching. Expressed more formally, Catholic Social Teaching is a body of doctrine developed by the Catholic Church dealing with social justice, poverty and wealth. The basis of the doctrine was laid out in Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter Rerum Novarum, with principles rooted in the Gospel. The doctrine was influenced by the writings of Catholic thinkers such as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine of Hippo, and from the practical actions of men like Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, the founder of the SVP. The themes outlined in Catholic Social Teaching are ways of expressing both our love for God and our love for neighbour.

## The St Vincent de Paul Society: An Overview

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) is part of an international Christian voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty in all its forms by providing practical assistance to people in need. Founded in Britain in 1844, we foster diverse and inclusive connections, as a Society that is welcoming of people of all faiths and none. We joyfully extend our hand in the care and personal service of individuals and families who need support.

Our 10,000 members, motivated by faith, visit vulnerable or isolated people across England and Wales and offer them friendship and practical support. The essence of our work is person-to-person contact and spending time with people is our greatest gift.

**OVER** **876**  
member groups

*make over* **253,000**  
VISITS OR CALLS to around

**55,000** people  
each year

*your*  
donations & support  
*help us* **LOCALLY**

TO BRING **friendship** to the **LONELY**

**FOOD** to the *& shelter*  
*hungry* to the **HOMELESS**



# Our Story & Key People:



### Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

The St Vincent de Paul Society was started in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam, a 19 year old law student at the Sorbonne University. Responding to the great poverty in the Paris of his day, he and a group of friends began visiting the homes of the poor, bringing practical assistance of food and firewood, as well as something less tangible - empathy and love. Frederic and his friends began meeting regularly and formed the first conference. They decided to adopt the name of the St Vincent de Paul Society after the patron saint of charities.



### Saint Vincent de Paul

Born into a poor family, Saint Vincent de Paul became a priest at the age of 19. He led an interesting life. At a young age, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery. During this time, it was claimed he witnessed the terrible conditions in which slaves were forced to live. Upon becoming free, he had the opportunity to preach to the wealthy, but instead, he focused on spreading the Good News to people who were sick, orphaned, elderly, starving or abandoned. He was canonised (declared a saint) in 1737 and named the universal patron of Catholic charities in 1885.



### Saint Louise de Marillac

With St Vincent de Paul, Louise started the Daughters of Charity (an order of nuns) 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.



### Blessed Rosalie Rendu

Jeanne Marie Rendu grew up during the French Revolution in 1789. She faced some tough times at an early age when her father and baby sister died and was forced to help her mother care for her two younger sisters. Jeanne's mother sent her to boarding school soon after. It was here she discovered the Daughters of Charity and was given the name Rosalie. As a Daughter of Charity, she opened a pharmacy, a school, an orphanage, a home for the elderly and a youth club. She became the "Good Mother of All" and worked closely with Blessed Fredric Ozanam to perform good works for the St Vincent de Paul Society.



# Where we are working:

## Befriending

Home visiting is the core work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in England & Wales. Home visits are mainly carried out in pairs, with conference members providing support to people experiencing hardships by offering them practical help. More importantly, our members offer emotional guidance to allow people to take control of their lives and continue the tradition established by Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

## Advocacy

When the voice of the poor calls, we listen. Our grassroots approach to advocacy engages individuals, communities, organisations, faith groups and government. Our extensive network of SVP groups creates a safe and supportive environment for those who feel powerless, left behind or not listened to, where they are empowered to find a better and more fulfilling life. We apply the messages of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to our work by placing human dignity, fairness and the collective good of society at the centre of our work. We seek to enable people, through on-the-ground support as well as our social justice work, to help people to speak up for themselves and what they need.

## Young Vincentians

All over England and Wales children, young people and young adults are taking up the invitation to join the Vincentian family and turn their concern into real action! These groups are based in schools, youth hubs and parishes. The energy they bring is hugely important to the greater work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. For over 100 years summer camps for children have been run at various locations around England and Wales.

## Community Support Projects

Community Support Projects (CSP) is the collective term we use to describe all the project work we do in the community. Community Support Projects includes our furniture stores, support centres, supported accommodation and our contract with the Home Office to manage and run local Approved Premises. SVP members are also involved with holiday camps and the running of local soup runs and food banks.

## Retail

We have a number of St Vincent's community shops all around England and Wales. The primary role of our shops is to help raise vital funds to support our work and mission. Every purchase made in our shops helps someone in need. Our shops are full of sustainable, ethically sourced and recycled products. By giving opportunities to shop sustainably, we are also doing our bit to reduce our impact on the environment and increase the life-span of a product that may otherwise go to a landfill.