



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

SVP FORGET ME NOT SVP RECONCILIATION SERVICE LEADERS GUIDE





**'I just escaped to keep my life, to be safe.
That's the most important thing.'**

Introduction & Foreword:

Pope Francis has spoken many times about the importance of helping and welcoming migrants and refugees. The SVP is in the unique position of being able to meaningfully contribute to campaigns on this topic given its frontline experience in supporting refugees and migrants.

The SVP's social justice work responds to the needs of people every day. Our Society has over 200 volunteer groups which support refugees and people seeking asylum, in addition to our St Vincent's centres in Leeds and Bradford, which provide frontline advice and support to migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. From providing practical support and ESOL classes to advice and advocacy, and from leading on community events and initiatives to promoting inclusion and integration, we have decades of experience in this area.

Many of the people we support every day struggle to meet basic living standards. They face destitution and homelessness, and they often feel isolated. While our Society responds to immediate need and supports people facing challenges, we also understand the importance of challenging policies, systems, and the root causes of poverty and discrimination. By campaigning for the rights of people who face discrimination and unfairness, we put our faith and concern into action.



'Our societies will have a 'colourful' future, enriched by diversity and by cultural exchanges. Consequently, we must even now learn to live together in harmony and peace.'

Pope Francis for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021

What you will need:

- Script for readers
- Pen (1 per person)
- The forget-me-not booklet (1 per person)
- Laptop and projector PowerPoint (find via information required here)
- Quiet background music
- SVP forget-me-not blue petals
- SVP forget-me-not yellow centre

Room set-up:

- Create a simple focal point in the room In the best possible way allow space between chairs for young people
- If the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available, set up a space where young people can celebrate the sacrament in line with your school/college/parish safeguarding practices

Often the first few moments of a liturgy can establish how a time of prayer will go. Especially where our young people are transitioning between spaces it can be important to give space for them to settle into what is about to happen. After welcoming the group into the space and having made sure they have the liturgy booklet, invite them to settle for a few moments and to still themselves. To facilitate this time of silence, build your sacred space. Put on some quiet background music, bring forward the Word of God and light a candle.



Reconciliation Service:

Opening Prayer & Reflection

(Continue playing music in the background if you wish)

LEADER:

We come together in this place as a community.

We gather because you tell us that when we do, you too are present with us.

We come together knowing that despite our potential for good, we have often fallen short.

We have failed to see beyond our first impression of the stranger.

We have chosen to not use our voice in a positive way.

We have stopped short of showing kindness because we have been too busy.

In this space:

We gather to pray.

We gather to hear the story of our brothers and sisters.

We gather knowing that you want to make our hearts new.

We gather to experience that love only you can give.

We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

READER 1:

Over and over again in the scriptures we are told that we have been chosen. In the book of Deuteronomy we are told that “you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on Earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

READER 2:

In Colossians, St Paul tells us that “as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love.”

READER 3:

And in 1 Peter, we are told again “you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the greatness of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” LEADER: Our world can often feel like a place where your importance and value is based on what you own, how skilled you are, and where you live and where you are from. Our scriptures today tell us another story (pause), they speak a truth that is often unheard. They say each person is of value. On the front page of your booklet for just a few moments write your own name and either draw or write things that are valuable about you. Are you a good listener? Do you give good advice? Are you the one who can make people laugh or feel safe? Are you gentle or are you loud?

READER 4:

That value is not based on what a person has or where they are from, but simply because of who they are created by God with dignity and worth. Today is a chance for us to reflect on the world we want to build. It’s an invitation to explore the parts of our lives where we need forgiveness and to experience God’s healing love.

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READER 1:

The SVP is an organisation of people of all ages around the world who follow the example of St Vincent de Paul. St Vincent said we should "make it a practise to judge people and things in the best light, at all times and in all situations." Following this example, SVP members work hard to befriend and help anyone in need, in their local community and further afield.

READER 2:

The SVP supports refugees and asylum seekers, who are often forgotten, and who, for many different reasons, have had to leave their home and come to the UK. Often those in this group have endured harrowing experiences. Forced to flee, many have lost family members, left behind their homes and everything that they had built in the countries in which they were born. When they arrive in the UK, they still face uncertainty. They are often unsure of where they will be placed, and if they will ever be reunited with family members.

LEADER:

On page 2 and 3 of your booklet is Josephine's story. Please take a few moments in the stillness we have created to read it to yourself or listen as we share the story now.

READER 3:

Josephine is a care worker with three young children living in a town in the north of England. She is also someone who travelled with her family from the war-torn country of South Sudan to seek asylum in the UK. Josephine and her family have been granted a leave to remain for the last six years, and she has been allowed to work, but the system in which she is caught up is unfriendly and demanding. Every three years she is expected to apply again for permission for her and her children to stay in the UK, which is expensive, time-consuming and extremely stressful for her family. Josephine's children can't remember the country they came from, but every three years the fear that they will have to return fills them with fear. Josephine works hard as a care worker, and she would like to go to university to train as a nurse, but her current right to stay doesn't permit her to study for a nursing degree.

READER 4:

The SVP met Josephine through their community outreach work, at first supporting with food parcels, clothing and a few essentials for the children, but after befriending the family, SVP members have now accompanied them through two reapplications. The help Josephine's family receives has changed, and although food and clothing are still helpful, she now values the SVP's support in filling in countless forms. In her last application to remain in the UK, the SVP paid the solicitor's fee, which was beyond the family's income. Although some solicitors will offer their services for free, or for a charitable fee, there are still costs to be met during the application process. One of Josephine's children is now 10 years old and is doing well at school. She has joined a local football team, and they were recently asked to get their friends and family to sponsor them in a goal shooting competition. SVP members sponsored Josephine's daughter so that she felt part of her team and her community. Befriending means more than just giving the necessities to families like Josephine's, it means reaching out with love and seeing the person or people as individuals. It means recognising that they are just like any of us, and need love, understanding and friendship.

LEADER:

For a moment perhaps try to think about how we might cope if tomorrow we woke up in a country where we didn't speak the language or know anyone. If you were told that you couldn't plan to go to university and you couldn't work to get the job you dream of having. What if you were told that every three years you might be asked to pack up and go back to a place of which you have no recollection. How do you think you'd manage? What help might you need? What would you hope for? How would you like to be looked after?



Examination of Conscience

(Continue playing music in the background if you wish)

LEADER:

(Invite all those participating to open their booklet to page 4 and make your way through the reflection, pausing between questions for a moment to give those participating time to reflect and note anything down)

We are going to think about where God is in our life.

We are going to think about where we are not letting God into our lives.

We are going to think for a few moments about the things we have done that we don't feel good about, and what has caused us to do these things?

Listen carefully to the questions, and as we move through, note down on page 3 anything that comes to mind. This is to be done in private and is for you only.

READER 1:

In the first box write down anything that comes to mind as you listen. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on Earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

We have heard again today that we have been chosen by God.

But do I make time during my day to think about God?

Do I pray and share my day with God?

We are God's treasured possession.

Do I help those I come across to feel important and accepted?

Can I sometimes place more worth in things over people?

Do I take the people and things I have in my life for granted?

READER 2:

Moving now to the second box on the back page. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love.

Do I dress as Paul told us we must in Colossians with kindness, and patience?

Am I kind, especially to those who I don't know or who are different to me?

Do I ignore those people that I don't like?

Can I judge people poorly without getting to know them or their story?

Do I hold grudges against people who hurt me?

Do I find it hard to forgive?

Could I make more of an effort to open my eyes to people who may need my help and support?

READER 3:

Finally we reflect on the last box again writing down anything that springs to mind. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the greatness of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Peter tells us that we are made to proclaim the greatness of God. Do I use my voice to speak out against injustice?

Can I sit back and make fun of those less fortunate than me?

Can others have a bad influence on me?

Is there anything that is on your conscience that you are worried about?

Once young people have finished reflecting on the questions, if there is no sacramental reconciliation

LEADER:

Having reflected on where we can do better and the ways in which we have failed, we now say together our Act of

Contrition, which you will find at the bottom of the back page of your booklet.

So let's pray together: "O my God, I am sorry for my sins. I know I should love you above all things. Help me to make amends, to do better, and to avoid anything that might lead me to sin. Amen."

If you have a priest and are celebrating the Sacrament after the examination of conscience would be the time to lead young people through that process. Think about your own scenario, its important that whilst the Sacrament is being made available that we give the young people a focus.



Forget me Not Reflection & Action

'Dear brothers and sisters, our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate'

Pope Francis

READER 4:

The things on which we have reflected and the words we wrote down do not define who we are. Our joy lies in the promise that God will always choose us and will always love us. There are things of which we are not proud, but we can hand them to the Father. As long as we are ready to try and change and we want to do better, God will meet us.

LEADER:

Taking the petal you were given as you came in today, we can make a difference and respond to all we have heard. The petal you have belongs to a forget-me-not. In a few moments of stillness write a prayer onto your petal for all those who are forgotten. Especially at the moment those who have had to flee their home and are refugees or asylum seekers, those who are unsure about where in the world they will be welcomed and when they will feel like they belong.

(While the young people write their prayer, offer some support if needed - perhaps ways to start or words they could include. What do they want to ask God for? Is there anything we want to be thankful for in our own lives? Be bold - how would we like God to change this situation?)

Once the prayers have been written, you can either have a couple of young people collect them and create the flower, or invite the young people a few at a time to come forward and build the flower around the yellow bud by placing their own petal (think about your own practicalities).

LEADER:

As we bring this time of reflection and healing to a close, we pray: "Open our eyes so that we can see one another as you see us. Help us to see in the stranger a friend. Open our ears that we might hear. Help us to hear the stories of others and respond with care and compassion. Open our hearts. So that through us your love might be felt in the world. Amen."

What to do once the flower has been created:

- Display it in your school or parish.
- Invite others to add their own petals.
- Speak with your local MP about the work they are involved with to support those who are seeking asylum in the UK?
- Get in touch with your local SVP group and see if there are ways you can support the work happening in your local area.
- Use the additional discussion session for those with a deeper interest.

