



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

PRAYER & REFLECTION





SVP Prayers

Prayer for the Society spirit

Lord Jesus, we share in the faith and courage of our founders, especially Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Blessed Rosalie Rendu, Gerald Ward and Charles O'Neill. May their spirit be renewed in the Society of today. May we be open to the needs of those suffering poverty and injustice, remaining receptive to the grace of the Holy Spirit. We pray that we build a sense of community wherever our members are gathered. Amen.

Vincentian Family Prayer

Lord Jesus, you who decided to become poor, give us eyes and a heart directed towards the poor. Help us to recognise You in them, in their hunger, their loneliness and their misfortune. Ignite unity, simplicity, humility and the fire of love that burned in St Vincent de Paul. Strengthen us, so that we will remember you and serve you by serving the poor. May we one day be united with you in Your kingdom. Amen.

Opening Prayer (Option 1)

Help us through meeting together to deepen our Vincentian friendship and bear witness to your compassionate and tender love, so that our hearts beat with the heartbeat of those living in poverty, and so that we come to see poverty through their eyes. May we be a voice for the voiceless, speaking out with courage and charity. Amen.

Opening Prayer (Option 2)

Loving God, Give us strength. Make us kind and patient, loving and understanding. Give us the words and willingness to challenge injustice and wrong when we encounter it. Send us out this week, fired with your love, to work for you in the world and help us to be more caring in our families, at work and at leisure, for love alone gives eternal worth to what we do. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we pray that we may always be aware of our friends in need, and that we approach them with respect and compassion, always recognising their dignity. Please help them with their innermost needs as we do our best to walk alongside them. May we all become a living sign of Your love. We ask for Your help and guidance as we attempt to walk in the footsteps of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. Amen.





Reflection in the meeting

This time of reflection in the meeting is a chance for members to share something meaningful to them.

This could be a story, a photo, a clip from a film or YouTube or a piece of music.

It's great to involve as many members as possible in this part of the meeting, taking it in turns to prepare something to share. The pages that follow have some examples, ideas and stories to get your group started. Don't be afraid to be creative!

Suggested YouTube clips

[Kid President - Pep Talk](#)

[An Experiment in Gratitude](#)

[CAFOD - The Monkey and the Fish](#)

[Don't Put People in Boxes](#)

[Kid President - For the Heroes](#)

[Life Vest - Kindness Boomerang](#)

[SVP - England and Wales](#)

[Tomfoolery - The World Awaits](#)

[David Wells - Love Chooses You](#)

[Wrapping Paper - A Christmas Reflection](#)

[SVP - Well of Hope](#)





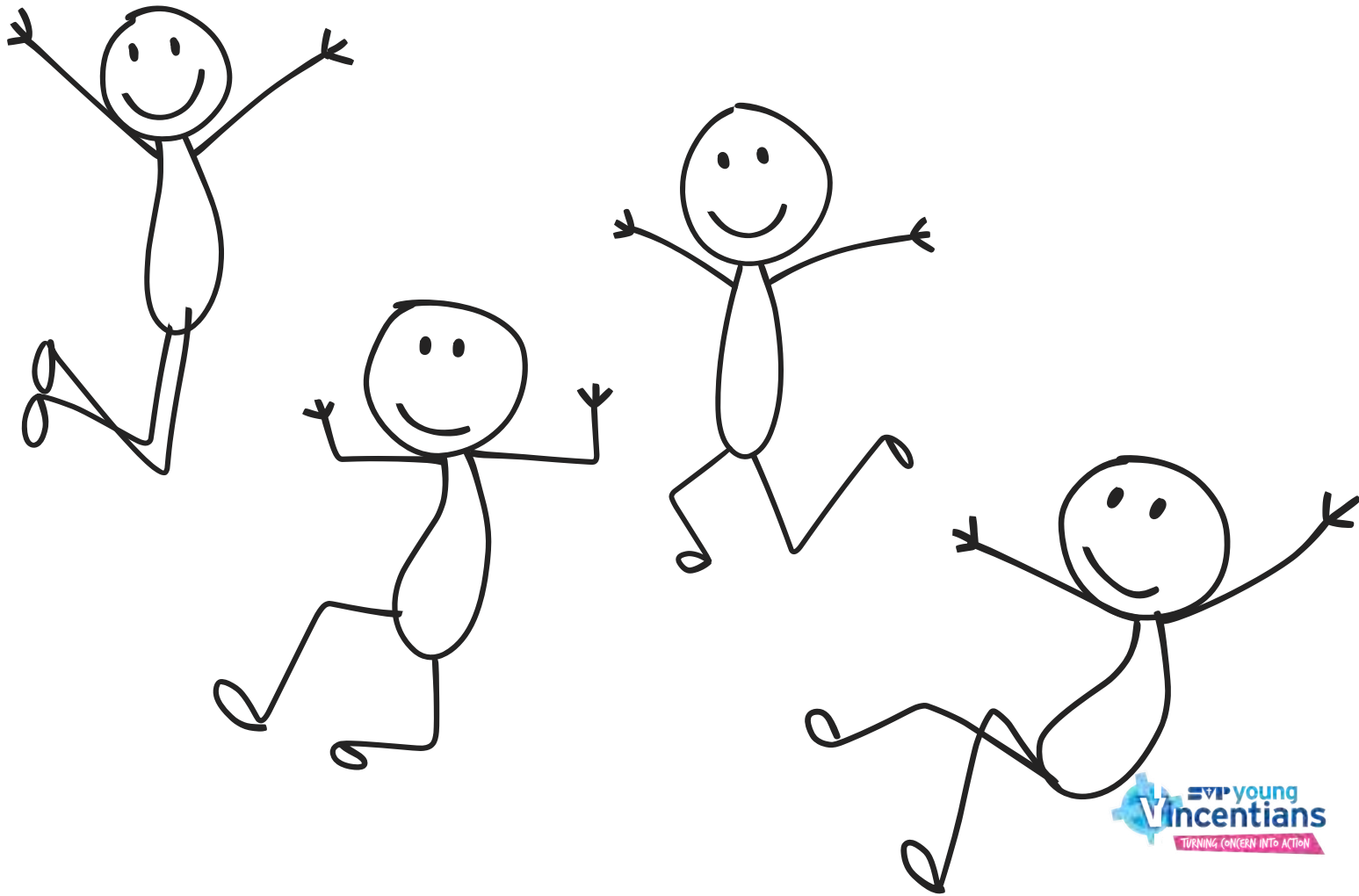
EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, NOBODY AND ANYBODY

Once upon a time, there were four people named Everybody, Somebody, Nobody and Anybody....

When there was an important job to be done, Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. When Nobody did it, Everybody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Somebody would do it, but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it. So it ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place!

Reflection questions

- Which of the people featured in the story do you associate with the most?
- Can you relate any experiences to this story?
- As Vincentians we are called to action. We step into the gaps that anybody could fill and try and move things forward for the good of those we serve.





THE RABBI AND THE SOAPMAKER

A rabbi and a soap maker went for a walk together. The soap maker said, "What good is religion? Look at all the trouble and misery of the world after thousands of years of teaching about goodness, truth and peace – after all the prayers, sermons and teachings. If religion is good and true, why should this be?" The rabbi said nothing. They continued walking until he noticed a child playing in the gutter. Then the rabbi said, "Look at that child. You say that soap makes people clean, but see the dirt on that youngster. Of what good is soap? With all the soap in the world, the child is still filthy. I wonder how effective soap is after all." The soap maker protested and said, "But rabbi, soap can't do any good unless it is used." "Exactly," replied the rabbi. "So it is with Judaism or any other religion. It is ineffective unless it is applied and used."



Reflection questions

- Do you regularly keep your faith in "use"?
- How can you better "use" your faith and values in your life?



THE UMBRELLA

There's an interesting story that's told about Queen Victoria. She loved being able to go out and be by herself, without being recognized, so she could mingle with ordinary people. And to keep from being noticed, the Queen would "dress down." On one of her walks, it began to rain, so she knocked on the door of this cottage and asked to borrow an umbrella.

Well, not recognizing the Queen, the elderly woman who answered the door lent her a beat-up umbrella, instead of her best umbrella. She did that because she wasn't sure she'd ever see the umbrella again of course. Well Queen Victoria left thanking the woman and promising to return the umbrella.

The next day a royal messenger returned the lady's umbrella. And he said to the woman, "The Queen asked me to return your umbrella." The elderly woman was heard to say, "Oh, if I'd only known who it was, I would have given her my best."



Reflection questions

- When was the last time you asked for help? How did it feel to need someone else? What was the response to you asking?
- Do we give our best to everyone or do we reserve it for particular situations and people?
- In Hebrews 13:2 it says, '*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*' What do you think the scripture and the story are challenging us too as Vincentians?



The stain glass window

During World War II, bombers wreaked havoc over Europe. In a small village, a bomb fell and destroyed the village church. After the war, the people of the village gathered any items that they had of any value and gave them to the priest to sell, in order to buy materials to rebuild their place of worship, a contractor was then hired to rebuild the church.

The contractor was given a time frame in which to complete the building. He had no trouble finding brick masons, stonecutters, carpenters and other craftsmen to work. He needed three stained glass artisans to complete the project on time but could only find two in post war Europe. One day a scruffy-looking little man came to the contractor and said he was a stained-glass artisan and had heard the contractor needed a third worker. The contractor was surprised, "You? You are a stained-glass artisan?" "I am and I will also work for three meals a day and a place to sleep at night. When my window is finished and if people approve of it, then pay me the same rate of pay that you are paying the other two artisans." The contractor felt like he could not lose and agreed to the man's requests. As the little man was leaving, he asked for one more item. Could you put a curtain around the window where I will be working? I don't like people watching me work. Months went by and the building began to take shape. Every morning the little man would speak to the other two stained glass men and then quietly go behind his curtain to work. As the contractor's deadline neared, he grew more and more nervous about what the window would look like or if it would even be finished on time. The day came for the townspeople to inspect the new church. The beauty of their new church home astounded the people.

A quiet hush fell over the building as they approached the curtain covering the third window. All they heard was the tapping of a hammer. The contractor barked out, "Are you finished yet?" The little man tapped his hammer one last time and said, "Sure, take the curtain down!"

There before the people was the most magnificent, most wonderful, most elegant and most beautiful stained-glass window anyone had ever seen. The contractor was relieved to see the astonishing work. He asked the little man for his name again. Yet once more, the little man said his name was not important. Then the contractor asked him if he could at least tell them where he got the glass to make the window. It was far superior to all the glass in the other two windows. "Sure," replied the little man. "Every morning as I talked to the other two workers, I would reach down into their trash barrels and take out the broken, unwanted pieces of glass. I used those discarded pieces to make my window."

This is just a story. But it is a story that tells how God, working through others, can take whatever you have become and make you whole again. It does not matter how shattered, broken or discarded you feel, nor does it matter what sins you have committed. He can put you back together in a far superior manner than you alone can.

Reflection questions

- What sorts of people do we judge unfairly?
- Who are the people who put you back together when things are difficult?
- Do you agree with the story that the challenges people face make them more beautiful?



BLESSED ARE THOSE

Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves

– they will have no end of fun.

Blessed are those who can tell a mountain from a molehill

– they will be saved a lot of bother.

Blessed are those who know how to relax without looking for excuses

– they are on their way to becoming wise.

Blessed are those who know when to be quiet and listen

– they will learn a lot of new things.

Blessed are those who are sane enough not to take themselves seriously

– they will be valued by those around them.

Happy are you if you can take small things seriously and face serious things calmly

– you will go far in life.

Happy are you if you can appreciate a smile and forget a frown

– you will walk on the sunny side of the street.

Happy are you if you can be kind in understanding the attitudes of others, even when the signs are unfavourable

– you may be taken for a fool, but this is the price of charity.

Blessed are those who think before acting and pray before thinking

– they will avoid many blunders.

Happy are you if you know how to hold your tongue and smile, even when people interrupt and contradict you

– the Gospel has begun to seep into your heart.

Above all, blessed are you who recognise the Lord in all whom you meet

– the light of truth shines in your life, for you have found true wisdom.

Reflection questions

- Which one stands out to you as being the most difficult for you to daily live out?
- Can you think of an example of people or a person who you think lives out one or all of these statements well?
- Which one are you going to challenge yourself to try and live out this week coming?



COMMUNITY CHAINS

Resources:

- A strip of paper for each participant
- Pens and pencils
- Stapler and staples

Each participant is given a strip of paper. Below are the instructions on how to lead the session.

- This year we have all come together from different backgrounds and over the year we will build a new community group amongst ourselves.
- Its a special group because the thing that draws us together is our desire to help others and make a difference.
- That means that this is a unique group, a rare group and things that are rare are really valuable.
- The thing that makes this group valuable is each person here, because each person brings something totally different and what makes us different is what makes us amazing.
- There is a bit of scripture in the bible where community is described like a body. How each part is important. Without an ear we wouldn't be able to hear and without eyes we wouldn't be able to see. But if the whole of the body was one big eye that would be no good because we wouldn't be able to move, or hear or taste.
- Its the same with each of us, we each bring our own special gifts to this group that make it work in a good way.
- We are going to make a paper chain. Using us and our gifts. Individually we are strong but when we link we become even stronger and is the reason chains are used to pull heavy things.

SIDE 1

Their Name, in as much colour as possible and extra drawings if they wish much like the example below. They can include their favourite football team, things they like to do, gifts that they have and bring to the group. Are they a good listener? funny?

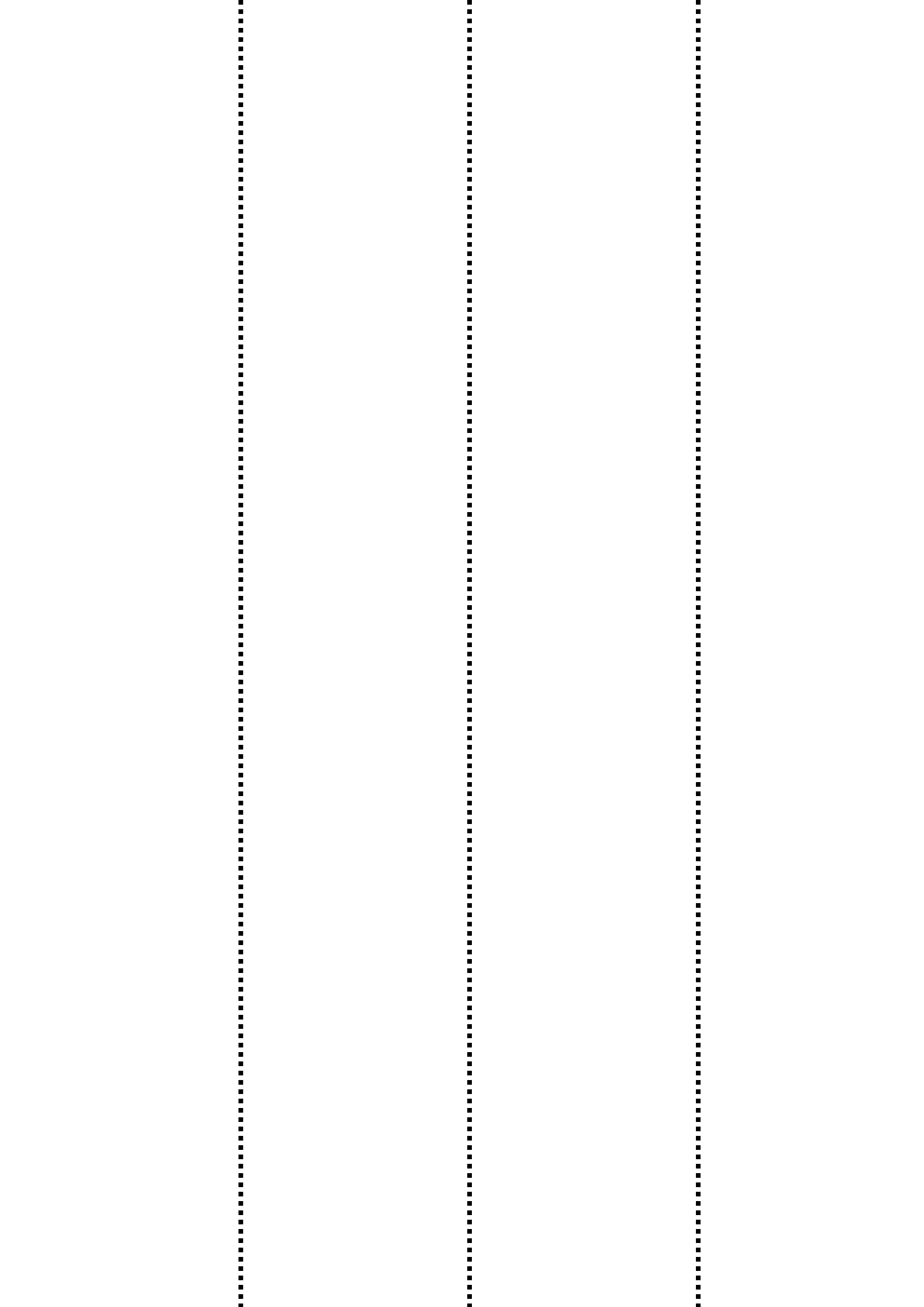


SIDE 2

'How will I be the best that I can be' write a challenge or promise for this week. Something small that they can do to be the best they can be. What can they promise to do.

BE A GOOD FRIEND!

- Use the chain as a focus during the meetings this year. If new members join ask them to add their own chain link.





PENCIL PARABLE

Resources:

- The pencil parable story
- A pencil card to give to each child as they leave or a pencil pre prepared (get creative)

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box.

“There are 5 things you need to know,” he told the pencil, “Before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be.”

“One: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in someone’s hand.”

“Two: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you’ll need it to become a better pencil.”

“Three: You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.”

“Four: The most important part of you will always be what’s inside.”

“And Five: On every surface you are used on, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition of the paper is; you must continue to write.”

The pencil understood and promised to remember, and went into the box with purpose in its heart. Now replacing the place of the pencil with ourselves. Always remember them and never forget, and we might become the best people we were created us to be.

One: You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in God’s hand, and allow others to see and share in your many gifts.

Two: You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, by going through various problems in life, but you’ll need it to become a stronger person.

Three: You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

Four: The most important part of you will always be what’s on the inside.

And Five: On every surface you walk through, you must leave your mark. No matter what the situation, you must continue to do your duties.

Allow this parable on the pencil to encourage you to know that you are a special person and only you can fulfil the purpose to which you were born to accomplish. Never allow yourself to get discouraged and think that your life is insignificant and cannot make a change.



STAR FISH REFLECTION

Resources:

- Star Fish template for each participant
- Pen
- Blue Tac
- Music to be played whilst action happens

- Tell the story

It was the night after a huge storm and an older woman was walking along the beach as the sun was beginning to rise. With the tide out and because of the power of the storm, she found the beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in every direction. In the distance, the old woman noticed a young man approaching. As the young man walked, he paused every so often, and as he grew closer, the woman could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The young man came closer still and the woman called out: "Good morning. May I ask what it is that you are doing?" The young man paused, looked up, and replied: "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they cannot return to the sea by themselves. As the day gets warmer, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water." The old woman replied: "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I am afraid you will not really be able to make much of a difference." The young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled, and said: "I made a difference to that one!" (Adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley 1907-1977)

- Often the problems in our world can seem big, but little by little we can make a significant difference to those around us. Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the SVP, said that it is our calling from God to set people's hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on Earth, to set it ablaze with His love.
- As the music plays, you are invited to pick up your starfish. Decoarte one side and on the other using the pens, write on the back of a starfish one small action you will take this week to continue to transform the world. Perhaps you will pay attention to the person in the room who is struggling? You might look to take extra responsibility at home to help? You might want to explore ways to support those who do not have a home? You might just want to try and stay calm and kind this week no matter what you are faced with?
- Once you have written on your star fish, take the blue tac place it in the sea (they could stick it on a piece of paper, bluetac to the window or perhaps you have a piece of blue cloth like the sea that they can place it on).
- (Play music while the action is happening, and once the action is complete, continue)
- Closing Prayer: Pray a prayer together.



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-St Vincent de Paul-



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