

## Who/What are the SVP?

Born in Gascony in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and ordained in 1600, St Vincent de Paul was recognised for his commitment to people's wellbeing and acceptance of their frailty as well as their gifts and strengths. St Vincent de Paul died in 1660 and was canonised in 1737.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Paris in 1833 by a group of students led by Frédéric Ozanam. Starting as a debating society named "A Conference of History", the members were committed Catholics who found themselves increasingly defending the Church against accusations of favouring the rich and powerful. They were inspired by the example set two centuries earlier by St Vincent de Paul and renamed their society after him.

The members of the newly formed Society resolved that "actions speak louder than words" and went out onto the streets of Paris to serve the local population face to face, offering support wherever they saw a need.

The movement spread and in 1844 a group came together in London and started the first Conference in Britain.

Frederic Ozanam died in 1853 and was beatified by Pope John Paul in 1997.

Today there are over 1000 Conferences in England and Wales with almost 10,000 members who are part of an international Christian voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty in all its forms by providing practical assistance to those in need. They are welcoming to people of all faiths and none.

The Society believes that we must deepen and strengthen our relationship with God, show our love and respect to those we work with and support each other in all we do. Then we can reach out to those who need help, always respecting the dignity of the individual.

Social justice is at the heart of the work of the SVP and central to its mission. From tackling poverty, homelessness and isolation, to supporting refugees, asylum seekers and prisoners, the SVP turns concern into action and addresses the root causes of poverty and inequality.

Twinning is the way SVP conferences in developed countries provide support to SVP groups in developing countries. St Ann's Conference is twinned with three Conferences in India. We pray for our twinned Conferences and exchange news a couple of times a year and undertake to send financial support to help their regular activities, specifically the support of the adopted families of the twinned Conference. This helps to ensure that vital funding reaches the poorest communities in countries where the SVP exists.

The SVP also have roles for young people in their work, from Mini Vinnie groups in primary schools to the Youth SVP for 11–18-year-olds who meet in both schools and parishes. The SVP also run Vinnie Camps – a week of fun and supervised activities for 8–14-year-olds across 7 sites in England and Wales.

St Ann's conference was founded in 1965.

We meet twice a month and, like those earlier Parisian founders, our membership contributes to our individual spiritual formation.

We visit people who might be housebound or feel isolated, taking Holy Communion and offering companionship and transport for those unable otherwise to get out. We also offer bereavement support. Recently, with the generous help of the parishioners of St Ann's, we have been able to support a local charity for the homeless as well as the Epsom and Ewell Foodbank and Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust) and the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group.

You would be most welcome if you would like to join us – please contact Cathy at [presidenta010301@svp.org.uk](mailto:presidenta010301@svp.org.uk) or take a look at the SVP website: <https://www.svp.org.uk/>