

St. Vincent de Paul said, “The poor have much to teach you. You have much to learn from them.” As we speak and listen to the poor, we come to know God better and are humbled by the circumstances of others. By extending a helpful hand or lending an ear to the less fortunate, we show God’s love and acceptance of all. There are many ways we can demonstrate this love and acceptance. Consider one of the following:

1. Become a better active listener by focusing on the speaker through good eye contact and body language, repeating back what he or she has told you to show you are listening, removing all distractions from your conversation (like cell phones), keeping an open mind, and by letting organic pauses in the conversation form — silence allows time for reflection!
2. Develop a family charity project that you and your siblings, parents, and other relatives can work on together. Clothing drives, holiday food bags, giving trees, and school supply drives all provide important resources to struggling families during expensive times of year.
3. Serve at a homeless shelter or other organization geared toward helping the poor.
4. Share what you see with others in the community and write an editorial for the local paper with positive solutions.
5. Pay attention to what your friends, coworkers, and family members are saying or doing — maybe they are going through something difficult and could use a homemade meal, babysitter, or some other assistance.²

St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us!

Socials with the Saints

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Sources include (1) Article on www.piercedhearts.org, *Theology of the heart- Life of St. Vincent de Paul*. (2), Edwards, *Seeing the Face of Christ in Others – Learning from St. Vincent de Paul*.



St. Vincent de Paul

Born: 24 April 1581 at Pouy, Gascony, Kingdom of France

Died: 27 September 1660 at Paris, Kingdom of France

Canonized by Clement XII in 1737

Feast Day: 27 September

Patronage: of Charities, hospitals, leprosy, prisoners, volunteers, St. Vincent de Paul Societies, and the Vincentian Service Corps

Vincent de Paul was born on April 24, 1581, in the small village of Pouy, in the southwest of France. He had three brothers, Jean, Bernard, and Gayon, and two sisters, Marie and Marie-Claudine. Vincent was the third child. His parents, Jean and Bertrande de Paul, were modest farmers who recognized Vincent's intellectual potential early on. They made significant sacrifices, such as selling the family oxen, to send him to school, first under the Franciscans at Dax, France, and later at the University of Toulouse, where he studied theology.

Vincent was happy with his studies; he had a desire to leave his farm life. He felt ashamed of his origins and of his father. He once said: “As a young man, when my father took me to the city I was ashamed of going with him and of recognizing him as my father because he went poorly dressed and limped. I recall on one occasion in the school where I studied I was told my father came to see me, a poor farmer. I refused to go out and see him.”¹ His father passed away in 1598 and had left him part of the inheritance to pay for his studies, but he rejected it, preferring to work for it himself.

Vincent was ordained a priest on September 23, 1600, at the young age of 19. His appointment as parish priest in the commune of Tilh, France violated the Council of Trent’s regulation requiring a minimum age of 24 for ordination. Consequently, the appointment was appealed in the Court of Rome. Vincent chose to resign and continue his studies. On October 12, 1604, he received his Bachelor of Theology from the University of Toulouse. He then received a Licentiate in Canon Law from the University of Paris.

In 1605, while traveling by sea from Marseille to Narbonne, Vincent was captured by Turkish pirates and sold into slavery in Tunis. This period of captivity lasted for two years and profoundly impacted his spiritual life. It is said he was sold as a slave and was at the service of four different masters: a fisherman, a doctor, the doctor's nephew, and finally a renegade Christian. Vincent's faith and resilience grew stronger, and he eventually managed to escape with his repentant master's help, returning to France in 1607. This experience deepened his empathy for the suffering, and ignited his lifelong mission to serve the poor and oppressed.

Upon his return, Vincent served as a parish priest in Clichy, where he revitalized the parish and gained a reputation for his dedication and compassion. His work caught the attention of the wealthy Gondi family, who appointed him as their chaplain. This position allowed Vincent to witness the stark contrast between the lives of the rich and the poor, further fueling his commitment to social justice.

In 1625, with the support of the Gondi family, Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission, also known as the Vincentians. This congregation was dedicated to preaching missions to the rural poor and training priests to serve in neglected areas. Vincent's innovative approach included establishing seminaries to improve the education and formation of clergy.

In 1633, Vincent collaborated with St. Louise de Marillac to establish the Daughters of Charity, a groundbreaking community of women devoted to serving the poor and sick. Unlike traditional religious orders, the Daughters of Charity were not cloistered and could actively engage in ministry. They provided care in hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the elderly, setting a new standard for charitable work.

Vincent's compassion extended to all corners of society. He organized hospitals for the sick, founded homes for abandoned children, and established soup kitchens to feed the hungry. His efforts also reached prisoners and galley slaves, ensuring they received both spiritual and material support. Vincent's holistic approach to charity emphasized the dignity of every person and the importance of addressing both physical and spiritual needs.

In the final year of his life, St. Vincent wrote extensive meditations on humility, emphasizing it as a key virtue for priests of the Mission. He wrote: "Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying." Vincent also said: "...We should also remember that humility is the route to heaven. A loving acceptance of it when we are humiliated usually raises us up, guiding us, as it were, step by step from one virtue to the next until we reach heaven. This humility was very often recommended by Christ himself, by word and example, and we should make a great effort to master it. Humility is the basis of all holiness in the Gospels and a bond of the entire spiritual life. If a person has this humility everything good will come along with it."

Despite his strong health and resilience, he became bedridden in July 1660 due to recurring leg wounds and other ailments. By September, his condition worsened, and he could no longer eat. On September 26, he attended Mass and received Holy Communion, remaining lucid until he received the Anointing of the Sick. The next morning, he gave his final blessings to the priests, Daughters of Charity, abandoned children, and the poor, passing away on September 27, just before 4:00am.

St. Vincent left behind a legacy of compassion and service that continues to inspire people worldwide. He was canonized by Pope Clement XII in 1737, and his Feast Day is celebrated on September 27. Vincent's life and work have had a lasting impact on the Catholic Church and the broader humanitarian community.

His work lives on today. The Vincentian family, including the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, continues his mission of serving the poor and advocating for social justice. The Society, founded in 1833 by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, operates in over 150 countries, assisting millions of people in need. The Daughters of Charity and the Vincentians also remain active, continuing Vincent's legacy of compassion and service.

St. Vincent de Paul's life reminds us of the power of compassion and the profound impact one person can have on the world. His dedication to the poor and marginalized serves as a timeless example of how faith in action can transform lives and communities.